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ISORA'S CHILD.

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ISORRA'S CHILD.

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"He that writes

Or makes a feast, more certainly invites

His judges than his friends; there's not a guest

But will find something wanting or ill-drest."

[*By H. W. Derby*]



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ISORA'S CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

O'er every feature of that still pale face,
Had sorrow fixed, what time can ne'er erase.
BROWN.

“WELL, Benson, we are left pretty much alone in this great house. How do you think that you can manage affairs without a mistress? I shall keep up the establishment as my mother left it—retaining the same servants, while I depend upon you to superintend matters.”

Louis Clarendon spoke sadly, and in a somewhat perplexed tone, as he regarded the vacant chair of his deceased parent, which, since his childhood, she had occupied at table; and as he sat alone at breakfast, waited upon by her substitute, Miss Dorothy, he eyed her more keenly than he had ever before done. She had been to him, since a boy, as much a fixture as the old sideboard, where rested the tankards of his ancestors; and he would as soon have thought of removing one of the carved posts from his mother's bedstead, as of cutting from the family tree, one who had stood as stately and stiff as the mahogany, as many years—consequential alike in reflected importance and inborn self-esteem, which dignity had nowise decreased by her present promotion to the head of the family, for head and trunk she considered herself. Louis had been reared since she was part and parcel, of the household, and she having considered him as a twig under her training, the full-

grown and graceful young scion, who now stood as sole heir to the Clarendon estate, was looked upon privately, as still a boy, who needed her guidance and direction, whatever airs he might assume as the young master of the house.

Miss Dorothy Benson gathered up the cups and saucers ; and placed them in the hands of the waiter, she being meanwhile apparently backboneless, and of inflexible muscle ; which being done, she turned on her axle, and observed that, " If she couldn't keep house, it was a pity ! that was all ! It was lonesome enough, she knew, but she thought, if there was no interfering, she was capable of ordering and managing ; and if she was to speak her mind freely, she wanted no help about it either ; and that if folks were regular as they ought to be, and niggers and waiting girls made to keep their places, and do their own duty, there would be no trouble about mistressing ; and if Mr. Louis knew it, he'd save himself trouble by letting things go on pretty much as they had done."

Louis Clarendon again eyed the maiden housekeeper, and cast up in his mind (he felt it presumption) their relative positions ; but although scarce two-and-twenty, he had learned that there was policy in war, and that the decrees of no despotic general were more fixed and arbitrary than those of a petticoated administration, to which one had been subjected since infancy—as the Chinese waddler becomes accustomed to her foot-bandages—toddling unconsciously. So the tall Dorothy grew seemingly taller and stiffer while the breakfast things disappeared, being contented with no apparent rising rebellion from her young master, at her first maiden speech on the opening of a new parliament. She felt herself, queen regent, and young Louis, the boy prince—so, while matters and things were being discussed, she placed herself at a right angle in her old mistress's rocking-chair, much to the dismay of the young gentleman, whose spirit was roused by the assurance of the spinster housekeeper.

" You have my mother's chair—place it in her old dressing-room," said he, authoritatively ; " henceforth it is sacred."

The young man was obeyed, but with a bad grace, and the " boy-whim," as it was contemptuously deemed, humored, while an humbler seat was taken.

" Benson," he continued, " you seem to belong to our family, and have been, I am aware, in the confidence of my mother :

you knew her plans and purposes, perhaps better than myself ; and, although I learned something, in her last illness, of her benevolent projects, there is much that I wish to hear respecting them. I know that she was much interested in a poor widow, and her child, that she assisted ; and, among her bequests, I find that they are especially remembered. I must, therefore, look them up. Where do they live, Benson ?”

“ A few blocks off. She is a foreigner, and lazy, at that ; but I ’spose it’s just as she was bro’t up ; and now she ain’t good for much ; she’s got the consumpted, and the young ’un is a spiled, headstrong brat, that’s come up anyhow, playing on fiddle-strings, instead of learning how to tidy up, and set things to rights, and help her mother, instead o’ being waited on. They are no objects of charity ; but mistress had her perculiar ways, and, while she was living, I hadn’t nothing to say, if she helped the poor Irish.”

“ Well—well”—replied the young man, impatiently, “ enough of your opinions. Have you seen them since your mistress’s death ?”

“ Lord !—child, no. H’ain’t I had enough to do to clean up, and keep the lazy servants in train, without runnin’ after beggars ?”

“ But I saw you sending a basket of things somewhere, by Timothy, the other day.”

“ Well, s’posing I did ; that’s not seeing them. I tho’t like as not there’d be occasion enough for vittles, as mistress used to send messes to the sick woman—delicacies like ; and, as better than three weeks had gone by, I thought I’d kinder look to their case—not that I approve of ’em.”

“ You are not so hard-hearted, after all, Benson.”

“ Well, I ain’t *soft*, I can tell you ; and lazy people never make much out o’ me, especially fiddlin’ foreigners. Like as not, this black-haired Romish woman, had a wooly, hairy-lipped monkey for a husband, that never could raise the wind for anything but a bagpipe ; and this is what his family has come to.”

“ Then, you have seen them, Benson ?”

“ Lord ! how you question me ! How could I help just seeing whether they was dead or alive, seeing mistress took to ’em ?”

“ Well, Benson, I believe your bark is worse than your bite. I am going to find them, and help them if they need it.”

"Rather new business for you, I'm thinking ; but I s'pose you might be in worse. Still I would advise"—

"Benson, there is one thing," interrupted young Clarendon, "that I wish you to remember—that I am of age ; and, furthermore—none of your savage looks, my Lady Dorothy—that no branch of the Clarendon family ever submitted to be ruled by their domestics."

The green eyes of Miss Dorothy Benson expanded spasmodically ; and as they met a pair which gleamed with fire and spirit, more grey than green, her own became suddenly invisible behind their yellow lids ; and if ever an expression of decided disapprobation was conveyed in hasty angular movements, the short, wiry tread of the nervous, discomfited housekeeper exhibited the like emotion, in her sudden, unbecoming flight from the presence of her young master, out of the breakfast-room.

Left alone, young Clarendon pondered on his new situation, which left him heir to a handsome estate, in the City of New York, and sole possessor of the elegant establishment which for many years had been the home of his family. Since the age of twelve, he had been the only surviving child of a widowed mother, whose chief aim in life lay in securing the happiness of her wayward, but affectionate son ; and now, as he moodily contemplated the past, and the loss of that sympathy and tenderness, which was unappreciated until lost, he buried his head in his hands, and silently mourned.

At the time of his mother's death, valueless seemed to him the splendor about him, heartless the tones that would breathe consolation, and desolate the world, where disinterestedness and sincerity seemed buried in his mother's new-made grave. He had neither brother nor sister to share his grief ; and none but distant relations that bore the name of either parent. As he pondered on recent events, he recalled to mind each wish expressed in his mother's last illness, each tone of love which blessed him, and the prayer of faith that left him in the hands of the God in whom she had trusted.

The nature of the hitherto reckless youth seemed changed by affliction, and he submissively sought to obey each parental request, each dying wish, as well as he could fathom their import. Filial love, and regret for his recent loss, awakened generous impulses, that might otherwise have lain dormant ; for Louis Clarendon had hitherto only thought of his own

gratification, and knew nothing of the exercise of self-denial, much less of the luxury derived from affording relief to the indigent.

Affliction was new to him ; sorrow had softened his heart—and any new enterprise demanding action, seemed a relief to his low spirits.

Six weeks after the death of his parent, he sought the home of Mrs. Islington, which was situated in a retired street, presenting in its exterior a common brick front, unattractive and cheerless in its outward aspect, without a plate to mark the residence of its inmates. But Louis Clarendon soon found them, and was much affected by the gratitude and joy evinced by Mrs. Islington, by a visit from the son of her deceased friend and benefactor. As she extended him her wasted fingers, he looked with fascinated wonder upon the wreck of loveliness before him. But the dark spiritual eyes of the sufferer were too sunken longer to awaken admiration, and the pale cheek too hollow to excite other emotion than that of pity—and yet what Isora Giocanti had been, was still written on each superb feature, and the beauty which passeth away, had not all forsaken the temple ruin, but lingered as the golden sunlight dies in the west, as if loth to desert it. As the trembling invalid's face was averted, Louis Clarendon looked about him. The interior arrangements of Mrs. Islington's house bespoke taste and refinement, and a struggle to preserve the appearances of better days ; still desolation was written on each old relic, each fragment of the past.

The walls of the room to which he was admitted, were covered with sketches of foreign artists ; many whose coloring and execution told of the immortal genius of her native land.

Curious foreign musical instruments lay about the apartment ; and in a fanciful cage hung an English mocking-bird. A portrait of a gentleman was suspended in a small recess ; and near it, evidently a painting of the sick woman in her earliest bloom and beauty. The shadow of her former self told this, as she stood beside it—affording so interesting, so sad a contrast !

Old Italian relics lay about the room, and blossoming plants sent forth their odors from strange specimens of earthenware ; and some were placed in broken images, parts of old statuary.

The sick woman looked still young, and seemed extremely helpless, and truly an object of pity. Turning from the invalid,

his eye rested upon a little girl of ten years of age, who shrunk from him as he entered, and bent over the strings of an old lute, while she screened herself partly behind her mother.

"Look up, Flora," said Mrs. Islington, in broken English, "the gentleman speaks to you—her neglected appearance tells you how ill I am."

Louis Clarendon felt the influence of something gleaming, soft, and bright, as the child's cream-colored lids fell on a cheek not transparent, but stainless. He looked for the starry eyes to reappear, but their silken ambush was too heavy and thick to suddenly reveal them; and if not, the long, wild locks, blacker still, that covered her cheeks and half hid her little fingers, would have effectually screened her from close observation.

The appearance of the child amused and interested the fashionable young man, who had rarely seen childhood out of the abodes of the wealthy, where he was ever successful by *bonbons*, or caresses in winning the most wayward to his side for a frolic, while the humor lasted; but his attempts to coax Flora were vain; she would not again look up, but shy and alarmed, sunk on a low bench, while she kept her tiny supple fingers on the chords of her instrument, over which, also, hung the mass of curls, almost unnaturally long and luxuriant for a child.

Seeing her inaccessible, the visitor addressed the mother; and disclosed his errand—informing Mrs. Islington that the dwelling in which she lived she could retain rent free, during her life; and that he was bound by his mother's request, to provide herself and child with an annual sum; and that by so doing, he only fulfilled the wishes of his parent, while she incurred no debt of obligation to him.

The face of the invalid flushed and paled by turns, while she with difficulty articulated her thanks. Finally, recovering herself, she spoke them feelingly; and sunk exhausted, inwardly murmuring:

"Oh! Robert—to what have you brought me! beggary—charity—alas! I fear, shame! Thank God our child will not suffer—*thy* child—yes, Robert, *thy* deserted one!"

Louis Clarendon heard nothing from the pallid lips, but he felt satisfied that his mother's charity had not been misplaced. He endeavored to draw from Mrs. Islington some particulars of her situation; and begged her to inform him in what way

he could best promote her comfort. He had promised to send her a physician, and to supply her with a nurse ; but the last kindness she refused, preferring, she said, to remain alone with little Flora.

"Can I not do something for *her*?" said the young man, looking at the child.

"Oh ! if she would be instructed ! but she loves music—she can be taught *that* !"

The conversation which followed awakened the attention of the little girl—who raised her eyes with a startled, earnest look, while her pale cheek reddened with a momentary glow, giving new lustre to a face peculiar and fascinating. Her form was slight, inclining to be tall ; and the play of her little glancing feet, and graceful action, to the eye of Clarendon, was poetry itself. But, as yet, there was no round development to her form, and little Flora, to the careless eye, was little else than a shy, slender, brunette child, who might have been good-looking with ordinary care, but who, with her uncombed hair, and neglected attire, attracted little attention.

"Flora," said the young gentleman, as she drew nearer to catch the bearing of their conversation, "if you will come to me, you shall go to school, and have a piano to play on, much prettier than the crazy fiddle that you have there."

As the visitor spoke, he drew the reluctant child towards him, while he played with the strings of her instrument, drawing forth such discordant sounds, that, in spite of the child's diffidence, she burst into a ringing laugh, which, for a moment, seemed to establish some companionship between her and her new patron.

"Then you don't like my music?" said the young man, laughing ; "show me, then, what you can do—but first let me put back all this troublesome hair ; you have enough for all the belles on Broadway."

"She only fingers an accompaniment by ear, to her songs," said her mother, in a feeble voice.

"Sing then for me, Flora ; one sweet song. If you will, I will bring you a bird."

The little girl shrunk back again at the touch of her hair ; and was sliding into her old resting-place, when Mr. Clarendon whispered a few words in her ear, which caused her to seek her mother's side, and to hide her face in her lap, while

she sobbed, "I don't want to go away—I don't want to go to school—I don't want a piano—I like my luty—I do—and I hate to go to school."

"You have never heard one in America, poor child!" said her mother, tenderly, "so talk to the gentleman—don't be so shy."

"But I have heard music, mama, at the opera with papa. I wish I could go there—but I don't want to go to school."

Louis Clarendon looked at the neglected-looking child, with her old faded dress drooping from her shoulders, at her tiny feet, and then at the fascinating gipsy little face, now lit up with radiance, at the remembrance of an opera; and the thought crossed his mind that he would gratify her again with the same enjoyment.

He fancied the idea of witnessing her delight—a child's unaffected enthusiasm for melody, so rarely enjoyed; and he believed that the little girl was one to appreciate the kindness.

The idea, he thought, might be absurd, but it was to him none the less pleasing; so the little Flora was soon overwhelmed with joy at the pleasure in store for her.

"But remember," said young Clarendon, "that you must reward me by singing for me at my own house, where we can have a concert together, and be good friends ever after."

The young man extended his hand while he spoke, which little Flora clasped, while she exclaimed, eagerly: "When shall we go?—to-night?—oh, yes, to-night!"

"No, not to-night; but sometime I will come for you. I must say good-bye, now; but I won't forget my promise."

The sparkling face of the little girl was, for the time, radiant with pleasure; and she still let her little downy hand rest in that of her new friend, while she occasionally glanced, from under her long eyelashes, at the eyes that watched her. After the departure of their visitor, little Flora grew pale and pensive, and sat so still and quiet while she hugged her instrument, that her mother roused her, and asked her if she was going to sleep.

"Oh, no, mama," she said; "I was thinking of the time papa took me on board ship, to hear the music on deck. He used to love to hear you sing, too, mama; but he didn't like to have you go with us out of the cabin. He didn't like to have me call him pa. Why don't he come back? Is he dead, mama?"

"Hush ! hush, darling. Yes, he must be dead !" The mother heaved a long sigh, and such a look of anguish settled over her face, as little Flora had rarely seen.

"I wish he hadn't died, mama. You used to be so glad when he came to see us."

"Oh, Flora ! better we had all died before we came to this desolation in a strange land. Oh ! why did he leave us !"

"Can't we go back to Italy, mama ?" The deserted Isora shuddered, and her head dropped in her hands. "No, no," she murmured, incoherently, in her native tongue ; "we have abandoned our home, and we will wait for him here—yes, though we die with sad yearnings. How we loved him, my darling ! and how he loved us !" A low cry of anguish accompanied these words, which drew her little daughter to the arms of her weeping mother. Flora understood little of the import of her mother's language, and her history was so unknown, and her residence so obscure, that few asked any particulars relative to her former life or her present situation. She spoke little English, though her child accented the language clearly and musically, softened somewhat by a slight foreign accent ; but we give her conversations without their imperfect utterance.

"In Italy, mama, we used to see him very often ; but after he brought us here, he didn't seem the same. I remember how you cried to go to England with him, and how he kissed you and said : 'I will go first, and then come and carry you to my English home, and there you will be honored as my wife.' I remember this, mama, because I listened to all he said. I am glad that I didn't go and leave you, too. Mayn't I call him papa, now that he is dead ?"

"Oh, yes, Flora ; he was your father, and my husband." Mrs. Islington then gently put her daughter aside, while she laid down her head, and murmured : "Yes, yes ; he was my husband, if he never called me wife."

"Why do you talk so, with your head down on the bed, mama ? I can't hear you," said Flora. "I am so glad that I am going to the opera. He isn't ngly ; is he, mama ?"

"Who ?—the young gentleman ? Oh, no ; he is very good."

"But he wants to take me away from you, to a school ; but I won't go ; no, I won't—I won't."

"Don't you wish to learn, my daughter ? Oh ! if I had been better taught, I could better bear my situation—I could

now write to your papa in English, if—if I knew where he was."

"But he is dead—you can't write to him now."

"Yes—so I fear—he may have left us for ever! You must try to please Mr. Clarendon. We shall not have to move, now; we can live here while my life is spared."

The foreign mother stopped. She could not speak freely of her death to her little daughter; though she felt daily herself growing weaker, she could not yet take from her child, her only sunlight. She had for two years borne her worse than widowed lot, for he whom she called her husband had brought her to a strange land, and deserted her in her helplessness. She looked back to her native country with sad yearnings, for there she had loved and *wedded*, as she believed, Robert Islington,—and though to her but an acquaintance of three months at the time of their nuptials, her faith in him had been entire. She reluctantly consented to follow him to America, but believed that she should soon return to Europe, and visit her husband's friends, as he had promised her; but suddenly she was informed that, without her, he must go to England; and so, with tears on her part, and promises of fidelity on his, the husband and wife parted. Mystery, therefore, veiled her life, to those who only heard her indiscreet murmurings; and from which they gathered the suspicion that she was not the lawful wife of him whose name she bore. Little had been seen of the gentleman who brought her to America. A rumor was circulated that one of a distinguished but unostentatious appearance, had, on her first arrival, been seen to visit her abode, when he suddenly disappeared; and had not been heard of since. But she had not been left penniless. Liberal sums were deposited for her, which she drew monthly, for some time after the absence of Mr. Islington; but they ceased after a year had passed, and she heard no more either of coming supplies, or of him who had furnished them; and she sometimes believed herself a widow. Mrs. Clarendon accidentally heard of the desolate situation of the invalid, and had been a benefactor to the mother and child. But the sudden death of this benevolent woman brought to the heart of the sufferer renewed anguish.

Weeks had passed since that event; and she remained in anxious suspense regarding the situation of the property which her husband had rented. But when she found that even in the dying moments of Mrs. Clarendon, she had been

remembered, and that she and her child were not, as she had supposed, homeless, she was deeply grateful. She was a foreigner, in the outskirts of a city—a fast-failing invalid, and also helpless from her imperfect knowledge of the country and its customs. She became, therefore, a prey to dejection—sometimes, though seldom, doubting the honor of her husband, yet pondering on the mystery of his conduct. “Why,” she asked herself, “did he require their union kept a secret from his family? Why had he forbidden her to reveal the event, and why had he, loving her as he had done, fled with her to a foreign shore, and then deserted her?” Her heart rebelled at the cruel suspicion that sometimes haunted her mind; and she hourly recalled each endearing word that blessed her as *a wife*. But, at last, hope deserted her—her faith wasted away like her fragile form. She had found a fragment of a letter written by her husband, evidently commenced but never finished; which contained a clause that burned like fire into her brain, and subsequently caused her death. A few words will reveal its purport. It was addressed to his brother, and after speaking fondly of his wife and child, concluded with—“Poor Isora! She is yet ignorant of my deception;—would to God that I could call her, in reality, my wife!”

The ill-fated, heart-stricken Isora did not die at once. The iron was suffered to enter her soul, while the supposed victim of treachery and sorrow pined away her young existence. In silence she mourned—for her child's sake she kept her dread secret unrevealed; while she nursed the hope of saving her the blight of a mother's disgraced name. She felt that her little Flora was illy calculated to struggle with crushed pride, and she trembled for the fate of her orphan child, too sensitive, too affectionate for her coming desolation, and when she saw that love alone could soothe her in her stormy moods, she wept to think that when she was gone, on no sympathizing bosom might her little weary head be laid.

But there were moments of hope still left to the sufferer (there are few that heaven permits to go deprived of all), and she sometimes felt that when spring's sunny days came again, she should grow better, and that she might live to secure a home for her child in her native land.

Flora grew very impatient for the expected visit of Mr. Clarendon, who was to take her to the opera; and talked so

long of her anticipated pleasure, that her mother feared much the result of disappointment to her. The ill-health of Mrs. Islington prevented the exercise of that firmness with her child that Flora's nature required ; and her temper was allowed to go undisciplined, and her will ungoverned. She could not bear patiently opposition to her wishes : though to her mother, Flora's vehement feelings were seldom displayed, unless in accents of fond endearment. She seemed to realize her physical weakness ; and her gentle words, or a tear from her eye, was potent to soothe, and calm the irritation her playmates might have excited.

One sunny morning, a note was presented Mrs. Islington by a servant, which proved to contain an invitation for Flora from Mr. Clarendon to go to the promised place of amusement the same evening. The child was wild with excitement, and manifested so much delight, that her mother tried to subdue her joy in vain ; she skipped, danced, and sung, and not until she saw that her gaiety caused a sigh to come from the anxious being that watched her emotion, was she quelled, and induced to inquire " why her mother looked sad ? "

" I was fearing, my love, that you would be too happy to-night (you know that you perhaps will never go again), and I feared so much that was brilliant, beautiful, and gay, would make my sick room a dull place for you to-morrow. But you must not think all happiness is found in such places. Supposing you could live where all was light, music and enjoyment, while you were idle, and leading a useless life, do you think you would be happier than if you tried to do some one good, made some poor aching heart happier ? Music is very sweet, my darling, and all places of amusement pleasant, and it is right sometimes for us to enjoy them ; but if we allow them to please us so much that home and friends, and the duties that we must perform, seem dull and distasteful after them, we had better never go to any."

Little Flora's eagerness was softened by her mother's words, and she assured her with fond kisses, so often, that home would be just as pleasant, and old lutey just as sweet after all the fine music she would hear, that her happiness was infectious ; and the smile on the lips of the little daughter fast radiated the countenance of the sad mother.

An evening came on, Flora's impatience increased, and she

so often ran to the clock to see the time, that the watchful spirit that viewed her, was not long in plotting some scheme to occupy her mind.

Her assistance was required in the tea preparations, after which meal the discussion of her dress became a matter of vast importance. Flora proposed to wear on her head a turban and feathers, which she had found in the attic among old relics, because she remembered that when she went with her papa that the ladies had them on, but, observing her mother's smile, she changed her mind, with the sage conclusion, that she supposed those that wore them "hadn't any *hair*, and so they wore *feathers*," but that she thought a rose would look best in hers. The question was therefore decided in favor of the rose ; and after arraying herself in an old, time-worn white muslin dress, more fully displaying her slender ankles, and tiny feet, she looked more fairy-like than ever.

While she was dressing, her mother had gathered from a rose-bush at the door, a few pale buds, and tied them into a small wreath, and laid them with a fond kiss on the childish brow of her little daughter, as she seated herself on her knees by the window, to watch for the coming of one who had caused many an older heart to beat with the same fluttering pleasure, though her attitude was more devotional than a city belle would have assumed. Flora, in her guileless simplicity, little thought of the many wondering eyes that would be fastened upon her new friend, at his reappearance in the fashionable world ; and of the curious ones that would remark his new *protégé*.

Mr. Clarendon was as much surprised himself at his condescension, and amiability ; and more at his abandonment of ceremony, in introducing into his box, under his protection, a little ill-dressed, untutored child, whom he had but once seen, and who might shock his fastidious taste by her appearance, and grotesque manners. He, however, true to his word, proceeded in a carriage to the door of Mrs. Islington. He had previously procured an opera cloak of satin and swan's down, to wrap his charge in ; and, if necessary, to cover up her poor attire ; a garment as unsuitable in its elegance, for the child, as the turban and feathers which she had herself proposed for her head.

Flora met him at the door, in her short, white slip—her bare arms and neck nearly enveloped in her wild-looking black curls, gaily relieved with the white rose-buds. Her eyes were

radiant, and her cheeks and lips bright from excitement. Mr. Clarendon smiled at the vision of eager joy she presented; and coming towards her, took her hand, and led her into the house—presenting her, at the same time,—a white japonica.

“I find your little girl ready,” said he, to her invalid mother, who now stood like a phantom, eagerly watching her little daughter. Her eyes moistened when she saw the beautiful flower he had given her. It had been her own favorite adornment.

“Yes,” she replied, “and I hope she won’t trouble you. Bring her home early as convenient.” She smiled gratefully, when the young gentleman promised to take good care of her; and when she saw how carefully he wrapped her in the beautiful cloak he had provided, and how gently he lifted her into the carriage, and placed her beside him, her tears fell—but they were caused by mingled emotions. Who but a broken-hearted widow can tell that fond mother’s feelings, as she viewed that little fatherless one going forth in her childish glee from the only heart that loved her, to seek in the world transitory but alluring pleasure! who but such an one, can realize the throb of anguish she felt, when she remembered that but two years since, a father’s protecting arm shielded her darling child, and that now, ere long, she must be left wholly to stranger’s guidance!

The carriage drove away. She was left sick and alone, without her darling, for the first time at night. Her child could not be saddened now; and she fell on her knees and wept, as Flora had never seen her do—for she was too self-denying to embitter her early years by sad repinings. She knew that she had little to make her childhood glad; and that to rob her of what few pleasures Heaven granted her, was like stealing dew and sunshine from a tender, neglected plant; and she shrunk from the thought of her ever feeling the mildew of blight and sorrow.

In the meanwhile Mr. Clarendon had nestled little Flora close to his side, while he amused himself with her artless sallies and rapturous expressions at the enjoyment in store for her. She had never been out before at night; the lights and the brilliant shops attracted her wondering eyes, which, added to the delight of riding in a carriage, caused her to be so merry and elated, that Mr. Clarendon feared some extravagant outburst after her arrival at the opera. “You know,” said

he, "that you must not be so excited, but remain very quiet, and listen to the play and music."

He was not used to children; and did not know that Flora's awe-struck, beating heart would be silenced with tumultuous joy, when overwhelmed with the intoxication of delicious music—he knew nothing of the child's intense, inherent passion for melody—so, after introducing her into his box, and placing her beside him, he for a time watched her with some solicitude, lest she should offend his sense of propriety, and attract more attention than would be agreeable to his fastidious taste in public. But, contrary to his expectations, as he unpinning her cloak, and watched her expanded eyes, he wondered why she grew so white, and what caused her little frame to tremble—he knew nothing of the passionate, delicate organization of the little being he guarded, or of the vibration of chords, more delicately strung than earthly mechanism e'er framed. Flora was a little harp of herself, and the wires were of purest gold. As the orchestra struck up a brilliant prelude as she entered, her eyes swam, and her head grew giddy, and, with parted lips and almost breathless paleness, she clung with both her hands to the arm of her companion—speechless and transported. Mr. Clarendon feared that she was ill; he drew from his pocket an exquisite fan, and commenced using it, while he said, "You will be better soon."

But Flora did not wish to be better; she was in a heaven of enjoyment, and looked like a seraph in her rapture. She only begged him with her eyes not to speak to her, but to leave her alone and happy. The curtain rose—she sat still, almost motionless. Mr. Clarendon, finding her so quiet, became less solicitous; and leaned back, satisfied with his situation and his little charge. His thoughts were elsewhere; and he cared little for the observant eyes upon him, or for the fair and beautiful around him, who eagerly watched the movements of the wealthy and high-bred heir of the vast Clarendon property.

"Who is that little black-haired witch with Clarendon?" said a young beau, in an adjoining box, "he seems as much absorbed with her, as if she was the belle of the season. A queer freak of his, to bring such a gipsy with him."

"I think he had better have dressed her first," said the lady; "she is the oddest looking child that I ever saw."

"And yet one can't help looking at her," her companion

continued, with a laugh. "Take your glass, and watch the expression of her eyes."

"I am more amused with those of her guardian's—this is romantic truly—where did he pick up the child? Pray go around, and ask him."

"See her, quick! I believe she is fainting—her head has dropped."

"Gone to sleep, I suppose—Clarendon's arm seems to be around her. He looks quite paternal, or lover-like, with his little gipsy."

The last scene had been enacted, and never had the performers more brilliantly executed their parts.

As the last melting strains of the music died away, and the voice of Lucia di Lammermoor, in tones sweet and thrilling, floated in one lingering note of melody, Flora could no longer restrain her tears; and fell on the arm of Mr. Clarendon, sobbing with uncontrolled emotion.

"Flora," said the latter, "I told you, you must be quiet. What are you crying for? We must go now.—Haven't you enjoyed yourself?"

"Oh, yes: but I hear it now—I can't help it, let me cry."

"Wait then till we get into the carriage; this is no place for scenes, Flora, excepting on the stage. There, take my handkerchief—dry your eyes and come with me. Stop, your cloak is not close enough, and your flowers are all awry, you are as crazy as a little loon."

"Oh, no, I am not, but it was *so beautiful*!"

They soon found the carriage, and Flora remained very quiet for a long time; though Mr. Clarendon could feel the excited pulse of the little hand that rested in his, while he placed her beside him, and bade her "sit away from the night air, and to be sure and not to take cold."

They were soon home, and Flora in her mother's arms, her heart swelling and her eyes glistening with the pleasure she had enjoyed. She did not thank Mr. Clarendon, or scarcely bid him good night; but she held up her little Japonica blossom, and said: "I will keep this in water, and then I will have something left; this will not go away like you and the music."

"Keep it till I come again, Flora, and then I will bring you another; and remember the concert we are to have at my house."

"But I can't find it, I don't know where you live."

"That is true. Well I must go now." The young gentleman shook hands with the mother, and with a smile for Flora, left for his home.

CHAPTER II.

Fall swells the deep pure fountain of young life.

BYRON.

MR. CLARENDON'S plans for the future were vague and dreamy. He had hitherto lived a life of pleasure, though he had indolently pursued his law studies, since his return from college. He was fond of any intellectual pursuit, and persevering in any aim which inspired his ambition; but the visionary project which he had recently nursed, of taking an extensive tour abroad, unfitted him for actual exertion at home.

Consequently, he passed his hours in luxurious indolence, with a circle of bachelor friends, who were ever ready to help him waste his time and money. His violent grief for his mother's death wore away; and in excitement, he drowned the sorrow that for three months had weighed heavily upon his spirits.

Having satisfied his conscience with the fulfillment of his mother's wishes regarding Mrs. Islington, and gratified the fancy of the child in going to the opera, although he sometimes thought of little Flora, they retained no strong hold of his memory; and in more exciting scenes the widow and her little daughter were forgotten. He perhaps would never have again recalled them, had he not chanced, while pursuing his way to his office, to have caught sight of the little girl standing by some baskets of strawberries, looking at them eagerly, and wistfully.

The dress of the child was foreign in its style; and seemed made of faded bits of odd material. She wore a straw hat tied down at the ears, which half-concealed her face. Mr. Clarendon hesitated, then finally resolved to speak to her.

"Flora," said he, "what are you looking at?"

The color of the child mounted at the address of her old friend, whose coming she had long looked for. Her eyes showed her glad surprise, but her tones faltered as she said.

"My mother would like some strawberries."

"She shall have some, then, Flora ; but first, we will buy a pretty basket, and then fill it with more than these little ones can hold : wait here a moment." The basket was soon bought, and soon filled with the fresh beautiful fruit for the invalid mother and her little delighted daughter.

"She will be so glad !" said the child, as she turned towards home.

"You have not been to see me, as you promised, Flora," said Mr. Clarendon.

"But I don't know where you live."

"Come with me now, and I will show you."

"But my mother will so like the strawberries."

"And don't you like them, too ?"

"Oh, yes ; but she is sick, and her grapes are all gone."

Mr. Clarendon felt reproached ; he knew his mother would not have allowed the invalid to pine for any luxury which she could have provided her.

"Well, then, take home the berries, and come to this same spot, when the clock strikes twelve. Will you remember ?"

"Oh, yes." The little girl was soon out of sight, her cheeks now bright as her berries, and Mr. Clarendon thought her lips were much redder.

Flora was on the spot at the appointed hour, with her hair neatly dressed, and a smile beaming on her face. She brought many kind messages from her mother, which were incoherently delivered, in her excitement to see Mr. Clarendon's home.

But when she arrived there, and was greeted by the stiff housekeeper with a stare of surprise, and by the other servants, who saw her from the basement, as she went up the high steps with their master, she shrunk affrighted, and wanted to go back. "But you have not been into the parlor yet, Flora," said Mr. Clarendon. "I have, too, some flowers and birds to show you ; and then, you know, you promised to sing to me after you came."

"Do you live here with that woman ?" said Flora, eying the housekeeper in the distance.

"Yes ; I have no one to live with me now but servants. Won't you stay with me ?"

"And leave my mother!" The child's eyes opened with reproach and feeling.

"Oh, no, Flora; but you will come often; and you shall be my little sister, and go to school, and learn to play on my harp and piano. Come with me now, and we will see if you remember any of your opera-music."

Flora was dazzled and delighted with the beautiful things she saw, and ran from one picture to another, and viewed herself at length in each spacious mirror, and fell into ecstasies with the "little boys and girls," as she called the statuettes and marble figures which ornamented the rooms; but one touch of the melodious instrument on which Mr. Clarendon played, brought her to his side.

"You sing, Flora, and I will play," said he.

The child was instantly inspired; and, in clear, superb tones, warbled an Italian song, with compass and skill. Mr. Clarendon was enchanted, though he greatly feared, by swelling her voice so young, that she would ruin it for maturer years. Her sweet strains fascinated him; and he kept her singing and trilling her notes, while he played for her, delighting the little songstress, in return, with an accompaniment so rare to her ear.

After leaving the piano, he insisted upon her staying longer to see his books and pictures in his library; and, while there, told her "that, when she went to school, she would have some of the prettiest for her own."

"But I don't like to be shut up—I like to run about where I please, I hate schools—I went once with Nancy Bell."

"Perhaps you would like a governess better?"

"What's that?"

"Why, it isn't a bear, nor a catamount. It is a nice, pretty lady, that will teach you, and make a lady of you."

"I can make a lady of myself."

"How?"

"If I could get flounces, and rings, and feathers, and a parasol."

"Do you want a parasol? Here's some money. You can buy one when you go home."

"No—Nancy Bell will laugh, besides my mother won't let me take gentlemen's money."

"But I want you to have a parasol, and to go to school; and by-and-by, perhaps, I will take you to Italy. Don't you know where Italy is?"

"Oh, yes, that is home. I lived there once. Papa found mama there. But can't I go to Italy and not go to school?"

"But I tell you, Flora, that I wish you to learn, and not grow up a wandering gipsy."

"You do? Who *are* you?"

"I mean to be your guardian, and if you will do as I say, I will be kind to you."

"Perhaps I won't like to do what you say."

"But you *must*."

Flora looked up into the deep-set eyes, that bent a decisive, half gentle, half stern look upon her face, and seemed to try to see what she could read in their expression. Her mother's were mild and soft, and she rarely said she *must*, and now she wondered if any one else had a right to say so to her.

Mr. Clarendon continued, "Which will you do, go to school, or have a governess at my house?"

"I won't have either, school or governess; I will stay home with my mother, and play on my luty."

Flora's eyes now flashed, her temper was roused, and her will determined. Mr. Clarendon was naturally imperious, and feeling the ingratitude and obstinacy of the child, and knowing her mother's wishes, resolved to make her conform to his proposition.

He was as self-willed as Flora, and though he liked her, he determined that her caprice should not thwart his plans.

"I will give you that little white boy in the corner, if you will try to learn," said he.

"It can't talk to me," said Flora; "it's dead."

"I will give you anything you like best, if you will tell me what it is."

"But my mother loves me, and if you take me away from her, all the world and all there is in it, won't be as good as that."

"Poor affectionate child!" thought Clarendon, "she is head-strong and self-willed, but has a love strong as death where she places it." He thought how soon, as with himself, that tender tie would be broken, to which she so tenaciously clung; and his heart pitied her, in prospect of the desolation that must come upon her. His resolution was formed. Flora Islington should be his ward—his little adopted sister—there was something about her that interested him, and excited his wish to have her dependent upon him, and to love him. But he

must be able to influence her, to make her conform to his plans, and to educate her was now his chief desire.

He insisted upon Flora having a lunch with him, when he brought out of the sideboard all the delicacies he could find, which, spreading on the table, he made her, after drawing up her chair, partake of. This movement restored Flora's good nature, who poured forth a volley of questions, and delighted Mr. Clarendon with her arch replies to his playful bantering talk. But he found that, amiable as she appeared, there was no yielding on her part the point of school controversy, and he saw little hope of winning her over to the decision he required.

He determined the following day to converse with her mother upon the subject, and to acquaint her with his designs regarding her daughter, and if she acquiesced, to try some other argument with the child to overcome her repugnance to instruction.

Flora returned home delighted with her visit, and related to her mother all that she saw, and all the enjoyment she had with Mr. Clarendon, and was especially animated and eloquent regarding "the concert."

Weeks passed, and still Mr. Clarendon postponed his visit to Mrs. Islington; other matters engrossed him, and Flora's repugnance to go to school dampened the pleasure he had anticipated in educating her. But the project being again revived in his mind, he determined no longer to delay the interview, and proceeded to the home of Mrs. Islington, to open the subject, and to ascertain fully her opinion and judgment on the matter. But a few short weeks had wrought a fearful change in the condition of the frail being he sought, and when he arrived at her dwelling, he found her in a dying state. Her physician was with her, and neighbors, who had been roused by Flora's shrieks, were around her bed.

When Mr. Clarendon approached the dying woman, she recognized him with an outstretched hand, and pointed to her little girl, who lay almost insensible across a chair by her pillow. He sat down by the child, and attempted to raise her head, but it fell almost death-like over his arm.

"Flora," said he, "speak to your poor mother." She opened her eyes, and finally seized the languid hand that attempted to reach hers, and covered it with kisses, while she moaned, "You won't die; they told me you would, and that I

might kiss you once more. But you are better now, and won't leave poor Flora."

"You distress your mother, don't talk so, Flora," said Mr. Clarendon.

But the child sobbed, and still uttered words of frantic anguish, only soothed by the promise that she should not be taken away if she remained quiet. But the death scene was near at hand, and the child lifted up to the cold lips of the dying mother for her last embrace, and torn away amidst shrieks of uncontrolled anguish.

An appealing glance from the still conscious mother brought Mr. Clarendon to her side; her looks fell on her distracted child, and seemed to say, "Who will take care of *her*?"

"Will you trust her with me?" questioned the young man, as he bent over the pallid lips of the departing parent.

"To you, and my God," she murmured.

"*I will keep the trust,*" he replied. A smile stole over her face, and thus her spirit passed away.

Mr. Clarendon remained at the house of the deceased until after the funeral—for the most time endeavoring to soothe the distress of the bereaved child, who finally sunk into a stupor of grief, in which she was borne to the home of Mr. Clarendon.

For a time Flora's situation wholly absorbed her young patron, and his efforts to soothe her were untiring. In the day time she rested in his library on a couch, where she lay and cried, and at times uttered such bitter lamentations, that words of kindness were unavailing to soothe her; and at night, when she awoke, and missed her mother, her sad wailings would reach his ear, and draw him to her bed-side, where, with her hand in his, she would finally fall asleep. The house-keeper's rough, but kind ways, frightened her; and Mr. Clarendon was forced to forbid a servant from approaching her until the violence of her grief was assuaged, and she began to feel more at home.

He brought her meals to her, himself; which were generally carried away untasted—a little drink alone sustaining her.

And when she finally began to wander about the house, in her little black dress, with her large black eyes, and pale face, looking seemingly for something lost, she saddened all who looked upon her.

She would sit for hours with her old lute, but without touching a chord. She watered her mother's flowers, which had been

brought to comfort her, but did little else. Mr. Clarendon could not persuade her to ride, though he promised to go with her, and to show her the beautiful green-house she had long wished to see. He finally became alarmed with her constant gloom, and consulted a physician, who advised that she should be placed among some young companions, and obliged to exert herself with some occupation.

But Mr. Clarendon knew that she became frantic if the word *school* was mentioned to her, and saw more forcibly than the doctor the difficulty of accomplishing her removal.

But as she grew worse daily, he finally resolved to travel with her, hoping that a short tour would restore her health and spirits. Quiet and wretched as she seemed, still Mr. Clarendon became fond of his little charge, and when he came into the house, looked eagerly for the little pale face to greet him ; and for the clasp of the tiny fingers that came sliding softly into his.

But when he left her, she manifested no emotion ; only looking up with a wistful gaze, and following him to the door ; when she would turn sadly, and go into the library, where he usually sat, and look at the clock—watching it mostly until he returned.

When she heard his step, the bright flush so peculiar and evanescent, on her cheek, would mount for an instant ; but the bound was lost to her springing step ; and her eyes grew sunken and larger. Mr. Clarendon sometimes feared that Flora was in a decline ; but her beautifully formed chest and strong lungs seemed to forbid this. That her nervous system was dangerously shattered, was evident, and her health seriously affected. He was much puzzled and troubled to know what course to adopt with her ; she seemed too delicate to be left with servants, and he, having been free from care or responsibility, could not nurse her himself, or devote as much time to her as she seemed to require. A stranger alarmed and distressed her ; and her cries of anguish, if left with them, pained him so much, that he was forced to exclude them from her. Every one grew weary of her grief, and the exhibition of her antipathy to all around her, but her new friend and protector ; consequently she was left alone until he came home to soothe her. She was not troublesome, but was satisfied to be near him, though he did not speak to her, and spent his time in writing or reading. All that belonged to him she liked, and finally petted,

but his dog; this she seemed to dislike, and was jealous of. She called him ugly and disagreeable, and would, if she could find him, shut him from the library before his master returned.

Flora knew, then, that his hand would rest alone upon *her* head; that he would play with *her* curls, instead of Sappho's; and that on her face alone would his eyes be fixed. Flora had a jealous, exacting spirit, but one devoted and sacrificing to those who won her love. This, Mr. Clarendon liked; he was fond of being worshiped, and being selfishly inclined, looked for idolatry from those to whom he showed preference; taking little pains to merit it.

To Flora he had been more disinterested and kind than he had ever been known to be to another. Circumstances, and the child's promising beauty and talents, had drawn him into assuming her guardianship; and he now meant, as soon as she was well enough to control, to place her at some boarding-school in the city, while he went abroad to travel for several years; thinking that when he returned, she might be accomplished and beautiful enough to amuse him, and, perhaps, hold the place in his affections of an adopted sister.

Of this, Flora knew nothing. He had yet not dared to impart to her his intentions; and determining to first travel with her on a southern tour, to benefit her health, he thought she might then be better prepared for his resolution. She seemed now so frail and had suffered so acutely, he dared not agitate her by the thought of separation. So preparations were accordingly made for her journey, and he started for Washington, with his young and delicate charge. She at first remained passive and indifferent to new scenes; and manifested her usual repugnance to strangers, and if she found her guardian more engrossed with others than herself, she had turns of moodiness and irritability, which often vexed and annoyed him. But she had so fascinating a way of coaxing him into good humor; and so lovingly showed him that she was wretched without him, that the spoiled child was soon forgiven, and his little Flora again his pet. A fortnight's travel was not without its favorable influence on her health; and the youthful guardian was soon repaid by the rapid improvement in her spirits. Perhaps she was happier, for being rarely separated from her devoted friend.

Mr. Clarendon began to take great pride in her appear-

ance, and admiration of her beauty gratified him much, though to his eyes, she had lost much of it, since her mother's death; and he feared that she would always lack that round development of form, so essential to his standard of loveliness. Flora was spirituelle and fairy-like, but she had been, and was still, very pale; and her black eyes, and raven black hair, made her look at times wild and unearthly—so much so, that in the cars or on the steamboat, strangers were attracted towards her, and if they once caught a smile on her face, the charm she exercised was potent and fascinating.

Mr. Clarendon was, however, the only one who could excite it, though he as often made her cry, and roused her rebellious feelings, by compelling her to follow his tastes rather than her own. She wept bitterly at being obliged to throw aside her old dresses, which she said her mother had made; and remained by herself one whole day, because compelled to assume, instead, fashionable attire.

Though usually indulgent, Mr. Clarendon was punctilious in such matters, and so resolute in this, that she finally became reconciled to an exquisite robe of black, in lieu of her old Italian fabrics—consoled by the thought, that her guardian liked her appearance better thus arrayed. They continued their journey on to New Orleans, thence to Havana, and returned to New York, after an absence of six weeks—bringing back with them, renewed health, and, to Flora, partially restored spirits.

Sappho came bounding towards her, on her arrival, which, contrary to her old feelings, pleased her; and she was induced to pet and caress him. Her arms were around his neck when his master entered the library; the dog instantly broke loose from the little girl, and, with a leap, jumped upon the former.

The salutation was cordially, affectionately returned; Flora, meanwhile, looking on with starting tears, and a pouting lip.

Mr. Clarendon observed her, and burst into a loud laugh, while he said: "You little selfish witch! can't I shake a dog's paw but you must cry about it?"

Poor Flora now burst into a passionate flood of tears, and ran and hid herself on the sofa pillow, where Benson, the housekeeper, found her afterwards asleep, with her long eyelashes still wet with her tears.

"That child is the most contrary, spoiled young 'un I ever saw," said Benson, who witnessed her jealousy of the dog.

"Where is she?" said Mr. Clarendon.

"Why, she went to sleep after her mad fit, just as though dogs were to be turned out doors for her whims. The child is looking better, though; if her mother wasn't dead, I'd like to slap her sometimes."

"Poor thing! she's tired, Benson; cover her up with my cloak."

"Hadn't she better be got up to tea, and then be put to bed?"

"No; don't waken her. I'll carry her something bye-and-bye."

"Just the way," growled the housekeeper; "she's humored to death, and will rule him, to pay for it, some day."

But Flora was too little and too delicate, in Mr. Clarendon's estimation, to combat with; and, willful as she was, while she was affectionate and loving, he was satisfied with her. He loved to see her around, for the first time, among his birds and books, and manifesting her old enjoyment in music. His ear was gratified again by her warbling tones, and her enthusiastic delight in his accompaniment to her singing. But his outward occupations increased upon him, and the love of his profession became more devoted, and his ambition greater to attain eminence as an advocate and counsellor. Yet this ambition was much interfered with by his projected tour; and he resolved soon to dispose of his little charge, and leave home.

But months still passed away, his purpose unfulfilled, while little Flora grew more than ever necessary to his happiness, and the child more passionately fond of him. She accompanied him on many of his rides, and shared his meals—his only companion. She learned to pour his tea; and her fairy-like attentions and devotion became fascinating and endearing, and he never felt a task more painful than to tell Flora of their coming separation.

But the school was sought out; and rich promise of remuneration offered for sympathy and kindness to his little ward, after his departure.

Mr. Clarendon possessed great decision and firmness of character, and resolution to carry out plans once formed; and, feeling that it was best for Flora that she should be more advantageously situated, and that it was conformable to his pleasure to travel, he no longer hesitated to inform her of his plans, unpleasant as it might be to her to receive the declaration.

Accordingly, after breakfast, six weeks after their return from their tour, he called Flora from the green-house, to which she had run to gather a rose for him, saying to her that he had something to tell her, before going to his office.

She came running towards him, sparkling and affectionate, looking up in his face, with her confiding smile; and seemed so happy once more, he shrunk for a moment from the duty devolving upon him.

After she had taken her old seat by his side, while his hand rested upon her curls, he said, averting his eyes, "Flora, you are now in your eleventh year, and can as yet only read and write, and that imperfectly. Your education is sadly deficient, and if you go on so without improvement—why, Flora, when you grow up, I shall be ashamed of you!"

Mr. Clarendon paused, and looked at Flora—she was very serious, but manifested none of her old violence of feeling, when the subject was introduced.

"I wouldn't like to have you ashamed of me!" she said, while her eyes flashed with wounded pride.

"Well, then, my little girl, you must go to a boarding-school, and learn, so that when I return from Europe, I may find you improved—an accomplished young lady."

Flora heard nothing but the word Europe, and of his going away.

Her little face turned ashy pale, as she looked up with intense earnestness, to see if it was possible he could mean to leave her.

"Will you go away?" said she, her lip quivering.

"Yes, for awhile, Flora, but I will write to you, and you must learn to write to me, and make yourself as happy as you can with your books, and the kind teachers I shall place you with."

"Go away! far, *far away!* without me, and leave me alone." The distracted child now burst into a paroxysm of tears, sobbing at intervals, as if her heart would burst with sorrow. Then suddenly rising, she threw her little arms about her guardian's neck, and frantically screamed:

"Take me with you! *oh! take me with you!*"

"No, Flora; I cannot take you with me; and you must be reasonable and good, and not distress me with your tears or remonstrances."

"But I want to go with you, and I hate to go to school."

"I know that, but you must conform to my wishes. I shall not think you love me unless you do so cheerfully. I shall feel sorry to leave you, but you must be educated, or I must give you up, for ever, Flora."

"*For ever!* Oh! I will go—where to? I don't care where, after you are gone."

Flora's head still lay on the shoulder of her guardian, while he could feel her heart beating fearfully next his own. He let her lie there, and sob, trusting that when the first shock was over, she would become calm and reasonable. He did not caress her, or speak to her; tenderness, he knew, would make her more passionate, but as she grew calm, he put her gently from him, and asked her, "If she had resolved to be acquiescent to his wishes, and give him no more pain by her opposition."

"Then, you won't leave me *for ever*?" Flora said, with difficulty.

The appeal touched Louis Clarendon forcibly. He could scarcely restrain his tears at her distress, yet he would not have her witness any emotion.

"No," said he, calmly; "I will come back to you in a few years, and then I hope to find you grown and improved. Perhaps, some day, I shall bring a wife home, to be a sister to you, and then we will all live together."

"And then I cannot pour your tea any longer, or put cologne on your head, or brush your hair, or bring you flowers—*she* will want to do this. I shan't like her, I know. Will you take Sappho with you?"

"No! I will leave him with you? You will love him for *my* sake, won't you? You cannot take him to school, but you can come to see him and Benson."

"Benson don't like me, nor Jessie much. I am glad that Sappho won't go. Oh! oh! I shall die, I know I shall, and everybody will be glad. No father, no mother, no——" The little girl now threw herself frantically on an ottoman, and cried for a full hour. Her strength was finally exhausted, and she lay white and motionless, her tearful eyes fixed on vacancy.

Thus her guardian left her, with Sappho at her feet.

When he came back to dinner, Flora was calm, and her expression changed. She said little, but Mr. Clarendon saw that she had resigned herself to his wishes.

He therefore instantly set about preparations for his own

departure, and for her wardrobe at school. Directions were soon given for an outfit suitable for her ; and no expense was spared to make it rich and comfortable. In this, the child manifested no interest, but went about as she did after her mother's funeral.

Mr. Clarendon bade the servants not regard her grief, but to talk with her cheerfully as usual.

And so the days of preparation went by. Flora seemed changed, as if years of trial had passed. She no longer sought her guardian on his return, and only passively answered his questions. He became piqued with her indifference ; and chagrined with her cold, reserved manner—but he said nothing ; he dared not risk another outburst of feeling, and so the hour of departure—of separation came.

He carried her with him to the school, having first informed her teacher of her afflictions and her desolate situation, and then wished to be left alone with her before he bade her adieu.

She bore her introduction better than he expected, to those who kindly greeted her, and assured her she would soon be happy ; but her bearing was haughty and reserved.

The door finally closed upon the strangers ; and the guardian and Flora were in one tearful embrace. Clarendon held the little suffering one to his breast, and kissed her tenderly—he had rarely thus caressed her. It opened the flood-gates anew ; and she wept like one bereft of hope.

"Now, shall I take you to Madame S——, or leave you here, Flora ?" said Clarendon, huskily.

"Here—here—not with them."

"And will you be a good girl ?"

"No one loves me—all leave me. I don't care to be good," said she, sobbing.

"You will not feel so, bye-and-bye. There—look up—kiss me, dear one ! *Good-bye !*"

Mr. Clarendon extricated himself from the little arms, that clung to him almost convulsively ; and after placing her on a sofa, went hastily from her, and rapidly away.

CHAPTER III.

And the wild sparkle of her eye seemed caught
From high, and heightened with electric thought.

BYRON.

Poor Flora was not left long alone to cry; gentle tones came soon to soothe her, and soft hands were about her aching brow, parting her curling locks, while sweet, low voices bade her weep no more. Blue eyes, with their tender, loving light, beamed upon her; and dark soul-lit orbs, flashing feeling, looked into the heart of the little foreign girl, and filled with sympathy; for all knew that she was an orphan, and that her only friend, her young guardian, had left her, to go abroad for years. And though prudence forbade the sympathizing tear to fall, in many a pent-up bosom the little girl was pitied.

But when the disconsolate child refused to be comforted, and begged to be left alone, she did not plead in vain; but was allowed to go to her little snowy bed, and to cover up her throbbing temples, as if with light she could shut out memory and anguish. But no darkness or seclusion could deafen the tones of the absent—ringing, still ringing, they came on her ear, till, like the knell of a funeral dirge, sounded that long farewell; and dearly treasured was that precious kiss, so rarely bestowed, in the memory of the desolate child.

But we will no longer dwell on Flora's early sorrows, for days of light, and pensive joy, came at length to her darkened spirit. Young hearts disclosed to her their loving depths, welling up with gushing fondness, for the little orphan; and hours of summer brightness brought warmth and fragrance to the crushed and tender plant; while guardian angels seemed to whisper peace and hope to the heart of the little Mimosa.

And though a dim, pale vision, with gentle step and sweet tones, came on her memory in many a sunlit and starry hour; and again and again, in fancy, she was clasped to her mother's bosom; and, with a fascinated spell, she lingered on the recol-

lection of him who had soothed her in her desolation ; yet time brought a calm over her turbulent spirit, and ambition awoke in her breast a desire to retrieve her hours of idleness, and to enter into that mysterious world of knowledge, the threshold of which she had scarcely passed. When she saw around her the beautiful and gifted, sparkling with intelligence, derived from a storehouse of rich attainments, she resolved to garner for herself the same rich treasures—and that he, who had raised her from poverty and ignorance, should not return and “be ashamed” of the child of his adoption.

Letters soon came to Flora from her guardian—such sweet and beautiful ones, too !—oh ! what a hoarded treasure they were ! How often she stole away to read them, that she might kiss them alone by herself. Curious and pretty things too, came to Flora from abroad ; and, finally, her guardian's miniature ; and all he asked in return, was for her to write him, and to send him one of her silken curls, as a proof of her love.

Now, how badly she felt that she could not better fulfill the task ; how greatly she coveted the cultivated hand, and pen of the accomplished writer—thus was Flora stimulated to improve—and she rapidly succeeded in her efforts—her bright intellect daily expanding under the fostering influence of her teachers ; while her spirit softened under affliction, and her love grew deeper, and more intense, for all that inspired the warmth of her nature.

She was a child that formed strong friendships among her playmates, if her high-spirited demeanor often caused her trouble and enmity. She abhorred meanness, and despised deceit ; and though she often incurred censure by her indiscretion and willfulness, her freedom from duplicity gained her the love of both teachers and scholars. For a year, her guardian wrote her frequently, and tenderly—when his letters became fewer and colder, though ever kind and considerate. Her purse was kept amply supplied, and no girl in the school was more elegantly dressed than the ward of Mr. Clarendon. But the marked change in the style and length of his epistles, at first caused her uneasiness ; but then she thought her guardian had so much to occupy him, and the alteration was so gradual, that her solicitude finally wore away. At the end of two years, she heard more seldom ; and as she reached the age of fourteen, her once beloved guardian was like a dream on her fancy—a some-

thing to bewilder, to excite her memory, and pass away—as a pleasant vision of the departed comes—not with the same sorrow, but akin to it. But Flora was happily absorbed in her studies, and derived intense pleasure from her pursuits; and music, as it ever had been, continued with her an absorbing passion. She had the instruction of the most able masters; and became an accomplished proficient in the science, giving promise of a vocalist of the first order. In every musical circle, to which she was introduced, no young performer could draw about them so admiring a crowd as Flora Islington. She had changed much personally in the space of four years. Her form had rounded to maturity; and though still light and elastic, was rich in fullness and womanly perfection.

The thin cheeks of the child had become plump, and of a delicate oval form, and her lips of a brighter cherry-red. The tint of her skin was of that rare, but beautiful shade, that the clear olive of the European south assumes, when brightened by an American sun. To no other complexion, is such a color imparted—and no skin wears so soft, bewitching a down.

But of the change in Flora, Mr. Clarendon knew nothing. He felt satisfied with her letters, the elegance of their appearance, and with the improvement she evinced in her composition. This he attributed much to her teachers. He could not believe in so rapid a change; the reports of her instructors, and the account of her happiness gratified him, and removed the solicitude he felt, when he left her in her grief and loneliness. But he had since travelled over the wide world; and in the most distinguished society of foreign nations—in the circles of the gay—the courtly and brilliant; the little pale image of suffering which he had left behind, was faint in his recollection. And when “little Flora” came across his memory, for there were times when he remembered the loving child, the vision was ever spirit-like and pensive.

A change, too, had taken place with the youthful Louis Clarendon. Travel had refined, and cultivated his always high-bred manner, and given that ease to his deportment, that acquaintance with the world, and the highest order of society, can alone impart.

His tour had been taken under peculiar, and advantageous circumstances.

The scholar, the poet, and the man of the world, had been his companions. The lore of the former had lent the rich fund

of historic fact to the charm of new scenes, while the imagination which soared on Fancy's wing, added poetry to sublimity.

The Past with its golden hoard, its romantic legends, and its antique stores, like "apples of gold, in pictures of silver," was added to the glorious, fruitful Present.

Four years of travel had polished and refined the outward being, adding to his stock of information a richer fund, and a fertile resource for future years. But Louis Clarendon returned with a character unimproved. In the gay saloons of Paris he had imbibed no high-toned views of morality, and among the seductive and beautiful with whom he had flirted, and whiled away his leisure hours, his tastes had become no more elevated, or his heart purer, for the simple refinements which had constituted the charm of his childhood's home. His taste had become extravagant and voluptuous, and during his last year abroad the pleasures and allurements of high life had drawn him, with whirlpool-rapidity, into scenes from which great strength of resolution was required to extricate himself.

In these scenes of foreign dissipation, he had nearly forgotten little Flora, and almost his native land, but he resolved to remain no longer abroad, and to seek in more quiet life at home that rest which his health required, as a restorative for his abandonment to pleasure. A heavy disappointment which he had experienced from the heartlessness of an accomplished coquette, who had captivated and enthralled him, but to abandon him for a newer field of conquest, disgusted him with the sex with whom he had been a star and a magnet.

After five years' absence Mr. Clarendon sailed for America.

He had grown stout while abroad, and his figure, always commanding and elegant, was now unmistakably distinguished.

Flora had not been apprised of her guardian's expected return, and not having for some months heard from him, made herself contented in the home in which he had placed her, rarely leaving it, excepting to visit old Benson and Sappho.

The girls had had a May-day party, when Flora had been crowned queen of the festival, and had never looked more exquisitely lovely than in her fanciful robes and floral wreath with which she had been gaily adorned by a pretty maid of honor, chosen for the occasion and office.

The day and evening had been passed with great merriment by the band of happy girls, whose brilliant eyes and flushed cheeks betrayed their enjoyment, when a loud ringing was

heard at the door of the establishment, and subsequently a messenger came to Madame S. with a card, on which was pencilled, "Mr. Clarendon, for Miss Islington."

Flora was instantly informed of the arrival of her guardian, and of the necessity of her presenting herself immediately to him in the parlor, where he awaited her.

Mr. Clarendon had looked up Flora soon after his arrival home, with some feeling of reproach since his recent neglect; and feeling curious to see her after his long absence, he hastened promptly to the school where he left her, with revived interest in the little pale afflicted one he had parted with in so much sorrow. He trusted that her tears had since dried, and that she had grown and improved.

But as he sat in the same room from which he had rapidly fled five years since, he could think of nothing but the sobbing distracted child that he had torn from his arms. His eyes now rested impatiently upon the door, while he longed for the reappearance of the pale spirit thing that he had held in his embrace, that he might again kiss her quivering lips, and take her soothingly to his bosom.

But Flora was in a merry dance when the messenger came to her, her small feet slippered in white satin, her form robed in a dress of snowy muslin, her neck and arms shaded with lace, while on her beautiful clear brow, lay among her curls of silken jet, the crown of roses. She was radiant and beautiful as was ever a girl of fifteen, budding into womanhood.

Flora's recollection of her guardian was vague and dreamy; he was still something in her mind to venerate and love, and she had no fear of meeting him, but was wild with joy at the news of his return. So, like a home-bound bird, she winged her steps through the long halls, and up a flight of stairs, to the little private saloon where he awaited her.

She met him alone at ten in the evening. He heard the soft fluttering of something approaching, but as the door opened, and the graceful girl approached him, he started back bewildered and charmed.

"This is not Flora," memory whispered, but the eyes of the ward and her guardian met. The recognition was mutual—his hand clasped hers—his arm was about her waist, and soft, affectionate words met her ear.

"My dear girl! how you are changed!" was all she heard. She trembled with delight—the intoxication was magnetic—he

pressed her to his heart, and in the fervent kiss that met her beautiful lips, neglect, forgetfulness were forgiven. She was again his loving Flora—but now so superbly lovely !

Her fanciful appearance was explained, in her own engaging, deep-toned foreign accents, which seemed to him as full of melody as her old songs. They fascinated him as with a spell. He listened, like one charmed, to her playful narration of their evening's enjoyment. And when she told him, that she had left the dance for him, and that the gay party had lost their "fairy queen," he wanted to kiss her again, and tell her that he could not spare her to return. But the shrinking modesty of the sensitive girl, who now instinctively felt that she was no longer a child to receive his caresses, embarrassed the accomplished man of the world, and her delicacy was respected, while he half regretted that he had lost his little familiar, confiding Flora. But he promised to come often to see her, and if she could obtain permission, to take her to ride with him, and to his home once more.

Tears of joy filled Flora's eyes at the promised pleasure ; and though she could not, as of old, meet the fervent gaze fixed upon them, she was happy at the prospect of being again in the enjoyment of her guardian's society.

An hour whiled away delightfully to Mr. Clarendon with his bewitching young ward ; but the entrance of Madame, who delicately hinted, "that her pupil must be much fatigued," showed him that he was an intruder ; and that he must not infringe upon her rules, in encroaching upon the society of his beautiful Flora—and so, without even a parting kiss, she bade him adieu, he thought as stiffly as if she was not *his* property, instead of the dutiful pupil of the dignified Madame S.

CHAPTER IV.

It haunts me still, though many a year
Has fled, like some wild melody.

ROGERS.

THE following day, a beautiful little Geneva watch, with *chatelaine* and chains, came directed to Flora, with an affectionate note from her guardian, saying, that in his joy at meeting her, he had forgotten to give her the present which he had brought her.

The delighted Flora received her gift among a crowd of girls, and a shower of congratulatory kisses on her guardian's return, and for all the happiness and beautiful presents he had brought her. But poor Flora's heart was too full for words. She looked at the exquisite token, and thought that the mines of Peru could not buy it from her; and yet, she would give a hundred watches to have him come again—to have him never leave her. Then her frame thrilled with the anticipation of going once more to his beautiful home, where she should sit again in the dear old library—he on the green sofa, while she played with his dark curls, with Sappho at their feet. The beautiful crimson blushes, peculiar to her complexion, mounted at the thought. "Oh! no," she inwardly murmured, "this cannot be; he seems younger and handsomer now, and he is only my guardian, and I have no right to love him so much—but then she thought he had been gone so long, that it was not strange that she was glad and happy to see him—her old and only friend. So the full heart of Flora swelled almost to bursting, while she went to sleep, with her watch in both hands, hid in her bosom.

But not one of the fair girls, with their streaming locks unbound, who watched her as she concealed her treasure, while they laid their heads beside her, knew how dearly prized it was, or how well she loved the giver. Now, she realized

how noble he had been to bestow upon her the priceless gift of an education, that should make her a companion, a sister for him, and she resolved that she would spare no devotion to her books, to fit her to fill so sweet a place in her guardian's heart. She realized, with a throb of pride, that she could now sing and play to delight his ear; and that, by practice, she could do still better; and their old "concerts" might come again. But then again her face was flushed; she had formerly sat on his knee, or close by his side, while her cheek had rested on his hand, and he played, and she sang, the songs of her childhood.

"No, no," she murmured; "I am older now," and she half-wished she was a little foolish child again. Flora had no mother or sister to guide her bewildered judgment, or to guard her heart in her hour of greatest peril, from him who had promised to keep the holy trust reposed in a parent's dying hour. Did her guardian, her guide, realize the responsibility of that sacred vow? Look well to thy heart, bestower of that holy pledge—an angel spirit hovers near. A young, pure heart is in thy keeping. In her spotless innocence thou has taken her to thy home—abuse not that child-like trust. It is sacred as her vestal purity!

Flora is again absorbed in her books, more diligent than ever. New inspiration seems to be given to her awakening genius, and, like diamond flashes, gleam the bright scintillations in each effusion that emanates from her brain.

Her song is even more touching and eloquent—happiness seems to have lent to her voice a more subdued and delicious tone.

She was at the piano when Mr. Clarendon came again, and being much absorbed in a brilliant opera, he entered her presence unheeded. He did not disturb her until she had ceased. Then he came forward, and placing both hands on her young head, lifted her face gently from her music—the long eyelashes were raised, with a surprised, timid look, from her earnest eyes—when, with impulse and joy, she clasped the hands that fell on her shoulders, as he exclaimed: "My sweet songstress, I have come for you to ride."

"And may I go?" said she.

"Yes, Flora dear, Madame says you may, with your guardian. Mine is a precious privilege," he whispered.

The happy girl ran for her hat and mantle, and with

buoyant tread, descended to the parlor, where Mr. Clarendon awaited her.

He scanned her appearance with deep interest ; she was now arrayed in a dark green silk, with a bonnet of rose color, looking he thought very sweet and charming.

He was bewildered with the change which a few years had wrought in her, and somewhat embarrassed regarding his future plans with his charge. But as she was well situated and happy at present, he resolved to keep her awhile with Madame S.

The carriage whirled away with the gay bachelor and the orphan Flora, for an uncertain destination. Mr. Clarendon was indifferent to their course, and asked his young companion her choice. A serious, earnest look came over her face at the question, and her lips slightly quivered, as she said, " May we not ride by my old home, and then go to Greenwood where dear mamma was buried ? " Mr. Clarendon was sorry Flora had chosen this drive, but he would not deny her the request. " It will afford you little satisfaction, Flora," he said ; " other inmates dwell there now, and the house is changed ; I will take you to Greenwood, but would you not prefer to go to the seashore ? Fort Hamilton is a pleasant resort."

" I would rather go to Greenwood than anywhere else," said Flora musingly. " Can we find her grave ? "

" I can, dear. Go to Greenwood, driver, but pass through ——— street, and then down Broadway."

Flora thanked Mr. Clarendon with a grateful smile, and they drove pleasantly on. He questioned her much about her progress at school, and respecting her inclination to remain ; and was charmed with the intelligence and cultivation she displayed, for her years.

The novelty and freshness about her, amused and delighted him ; he thought she would make him a dear little sister, and he wished he could have her as an inmate in his own home. He felt that her society would add much to its cheerfulness, and that her musical accomplishments would enliven and cheer his leisure hours.

He reflected upon a plan properly to effect this ; and thoughts of procuring a governess for her much occupied him.

He had sometimes contemplated marrying, but having spent so much of his recent life among the ranks of the fashionable and frivolous, he dared not incur the risk of seeking a wife

from the circles where he had shone conspicuously, as an admirer of female charms. He had grown suspicious of the sex, and at times, believed that there was no sincerity in woman kind.

Returning from abroad at the age of seven-and-twenty years, a thorough courtier and man of the world, he had already seen enough of life to deprive it of that rich zest, which the young usually derive from its enjoyments.

His ambition to become eminent in his profession again inspired him to application to business. He had not entirely neglected study while abroad, and returned prepared to compete with many who looked upon him as a novice in legal attainments. Feeling that he had wasted some of his best years in dissipation, and that nothing but an entire change in his pursuits would redeem his career, he accordingly entered with vigor and earnestness, into practical business ; and in the onset made so brilliant a *début* as an advocate, that his success was pronounced unquestionable—giving promise of that eminence which he craved.

He had again opened his establishment, procuring his old servants, and preserving in the same style his mother's elegant home. But after all was arranged, he missed little Flora, and he hardly knew how he could substitute in her place the tall beautiful girl, with whom he could not amuse himself, with the same freedom from reserve. She was now by his side, with the same swimming black eyes, and brilliant smile that dazzled him as a child ; and yet he could not talk to her of his plans, as unreservedly as he wished.

He steeled himself against feeling for her any warmer preference than for a sister, for Louis Clarendon was wholly an ambitious man ; and when he married, none but an elegant, thoroughly accomplished woman, he deemed would suit him as a wife. He now viewed the connection more as affording him a suitable mistress to his home, and as affecting his position in society, than in any other light. The lady whom he honored as his choice, he felt must be unexceptionable in the eyes of the world. What had his heart or fancy to do with all this ? and had any one thought of Flora Islington in this relation for him, he would have derided the idea of his marrying a little foreign *protégé* of his own rearing. He was contented with the romance of the adoption—the mystery of her birth—her beauty and talents—the title to which no one could lay claim.

It was a lovely spring day when they went together to visit Flora's old home, and her mother's grave. As Mr. Clarendon had said, she could derive little satisfaction from the brief view of the brick premises, from whence she had been carried forth by her young guardian in so much sorrow. Yet she wanted to stop, and look at the old windows, where she had sat so often, looking out upon the passers-by, and the lighted lamps, and where she had, by the side of her invalid mother, played for hours with old discarded luty—the treasure of her childhood. Here, too, she had rested on her knees, waiting for Mr. Clarendon to take her to the opera, while her pale angel-mother stood over her, twining the rose-buds for her hair—and, more vividly than all this, she was again in fancy, in that old room, the faded brick-front of which she could only now see, by the side of her dying parent, clinging for the last time to her faint-beating heart—where life was fast ebbing forth. But Mr. Clarendon saw her tears starting; and he bade the driver pass on, while he said, "Look to the future, Flora, and dry your tears."

"I wish I had saved something from the old house," said she.

"Everything was preserved for you, my dear girl; and some day you shall have them all, in a sweet little cottage, if you wish. Where shall it be?" he continued with a smile, "in town, or country?"

"Oh! I love the country, though not since I was in Italy have I seen much of it. It would be beautiful to live where we could see trees, fields, and running water."

"Some day we will try to look up a little Elysium for you. What shall we call it? *Italie*? Shall it be covered with roses or grapes? And who shall be the shepherd, to take care of the lamb in her little Arcadia?"

"Oh! I haven't begun to build castles or cottages yet," said Flora smiling, and blushing.

"When do girls begin!" said Mr. Clarendon, taking Flora's little hand. "They are such dreamy-looking, poet-inspiring things, that I supposed they were always roving in some fancy field, with some dark-eyed hero."

Mr. Clarendon's rallying brightened somewhat Flora's pensive face, but the old house and its memories, yet lingered on her mind, awakening more forcibly her gratitude to him, who had protected her; and as the obligation came powerfully over her heart, the feeling was too intense for utterance.

Mr. Clarendon saw that her smiles were very sweet, but that they were forced, and he thought if she had her own way, she would rather lie down her head, and cry. But this he would not let her do, for he had promised himself and her, a gay and pleasant ride, so, with such tact, as experience and knowledge of human nature afford, he drew her thoughts gradually from herself and the past, by exciting her imagination with pictures, glowingly exhibited of scenes and objects abroad, which so fascinated Flora, that with rapt and devoted attention, she listened, and forgot the sorrows of her childhood. She finally laughed and chatted with her old playfulness, and told him many anecdotes of Sappho, and her fondness for the dear old dog, that she used to hate so.

"How glad," said she, "he must have been to have you come back."

"And would you cry now," he replied, laughing, "if I was to hug the old fellow, and love him as well as Flora?"

Flora remembered her jealousy of Sappho, with some mortification, and was much embarrassed by her guardian's raillery; for she thought he must have had so much annoyance with her silly and perverse ways.

"I have given you a great deal of trouble," said she; "more than I can ever atone for. Poor Sappho! I believe I used to shut him up."

"And what for, Flora?"

"I scarcely know," said she, confusedly; "but I think he always seemed to me to take great airs upon himself, as prime favorite."

"And *you* wanted to be the little queen of the house, and wanted no dog-rivals in the devotion you received."

"How could you bring me my tea, after I had behaved so badly? I remember taking it as condescendingly as if I were the injured individual."

"You were a little troublesome comfort, Flora; but I am afraid you will give me more trouble than you ever have done."

"How could I?" said Flora, looking in the admiring eyes of her fond guardian.

"Oh, very easily, my pet; but I shan't tell you now, for you are only a school-girl, and I mean to keep you shut up for a long time yet. I can't afford to lose my little sis too early. Madame don't allow any young beaux about her premises, does she?"

"Only, now and then, a cousin or a brother."

"Cousins and brothers to the whole school, too, I suppose. They are ugly and disagreeable, of course; and you have to tolerate them for the relationship?"

"Oh, no; the girls say they are handsome and agreeable."

"And what does my Signorita think?"

"Oh, they help to make fun at our soirées."

"Can't I be admitted, just for fun?"

"I don't know," said Flora, laughing. "I will ask."

"Are there any pretty girls there, old enough to make love to?"

"How old must they be?" inquired Flora.

"Oh, about eighteen or nineteen; it is wicked before that—don't you think so?"

"I don't think anything about it—that subject isn't one of our studies," said she, archly.

"A very suitable reply to a guardian. I see that you are very discreet, and hope you will be as much so with those cousins and brothers that come just for fun. You look warm, Flora; what a color you have! you used to be so pale. Some of the court beauties would like your bloom. Your skin has grown white, I think—something of the olive left, though, that you borrowed from an Italian sun. I spent a winter under your native skies, and had many a gondola sail, by moonlight, with a pretty girl by my side: some of them shame the Venuses of their old masters."

"I would like to go there, some day," said Flora, pensively.

"You would never come back, if you went. Would you like this? I saw some of your relatives there; but I didn't tell them much about you. Shall I send you back to them, or would you rather stay in America, and be for ever my own little sister?"

Clarendon drew nearer to him the beautiful form of the youthful Flora; but the eyes he sought were veiled beneath their long lashes, and her smile showed a trembling lip.

Mr. Clarendon did not continue the subject, for he saw that it grieved her. They were now approaching Greenwood Cemetery. Flora felt a calm, subdued joy, to know that her dear mother's remains had found so sweet a resting-place. She was so ill at the time of her funeral, that she did not go to the burial.

The monuments of the dead were silently passed by. They

alighted from the carriage, and wandered slowly over the grounds.

Flora's eye was fascinated with the exquisite beauty of each verdant enclosure—each flower-garlanded court, where the death-king had marshalled his subjects, and covered them with roses, that the living might pass by and not see the skull and the worm beneath.

She looked with her eye of beauty on the sculptured marble urn, with its curling vines and cypress shades, and forgot the closed eye of the once gay sleeper, over whose ashes she lightly trod; then, on the proud shaft that wealth had reared, shut in with wrought iron and gorgeous carvings, and saw no hoary head below. Beautiful, too, on her vision, was the fair block of marble, where an angel seemed to spread its wings, carrying the spirit child to heaven.

But the weeping mother was not by to tell her of the darling she had buried there. And this is well: let us see but the flowers of mortality in our cypress-bowers; the anguish that life has for each heart in store is burden enough; for few there are who have not loved and lost.

Mr. Clarendon saw, amidst all Flora's admiration of beautiful slopes, verdant trees, and fairest sculpture, that her gaze was wistful, and that there was one humble bed for which she sought, where, she believed, no stone was laid, to mark the resting-place of her beloved mother.

But he led her on, trusting that her eye would be so fascinated and charmed, that no pang would seize her heart when she reached the spot where she lay buried.

They came to a grassy vale, where the trees were loftier, and the place more sequestered. A simple lot, enclosed by iron bars, lay before them; the grass presented one robe of velvet green; not a flower was planted there; but in the centre rose a simple block of Italian marble, and on it was inscribed—
"ISORA, wife of Robert Islington. Died, A.D., 18—. Aged 26 years."

"This is a pretty enclosure," said Flora.

"Shall we enter it, Flora?" Mr. Clarendon drew the young girl's arm firmly through his. "I have the key."

Flora turned pale. She now knew that she saw her mother's grave. Her eloquent eyes were raised with a grateful look to her guardian's, while they filled with tears. "Yes," said she, scarcely audibly, while she closed both her hands,

confidingly over the arm that sustained her; tremblingly, with whitened cheek and lips, she walked over the hallowed spot. Approaching the tablet, Flora read the inscription. Her head fell in her hands, while she rested on the marble. Here she sobbed and wept. Mr. Clarendon put his arm around her, and silently stood by her side. He finally raised her from her resting-place, and said: "Do you like the tablet, Flora?"

"Oh, yes!" she whispered, "it is simple and beautiful—like dear, dear mamma."

Her companion awaited her movements. She looked up.

"Let us go, now," said Mr. Clarendon, putting his own handkerchief to her eyes. She turned slowly, looking back but once, but when her guardian took the key from the gate, and she went forth on his arm, motherless and sorrowing, he thought of his vow to her dying parent, and repeated in his heart—"I will keep the trust."

The carriage followed them, and the wanderers entered it. Flora was pensive on her return, but conversed with her usual sweetness, while her companion, from sympathy, became devoted and comforting to his young charge, and bade her never to allow a wish that she had, to go unexpressed; and to confide in him as in a brother, whose greatest happiness consisted in gratifying her.

"Oh!" she murmured, "but you are not my brother, and I sometimes feel overwhelmed with"—Flora hesitated.

"With what, my dear girl?" said Mr. Clarendon gently.

"Oh, ought I to be so much indebted?"

"Flora, now you have grieved me," said her guardian. "I want you to repose in me as fully, as confidingly, as the flower closes its petals beneath the wing of night. I want you to trust me and love me. Can't you do this?"

Poor Flora knew that this was no difficult task, and the hand in which her own was held firmly, felt the trembling acknowledgment. Thus was the orphan Flora led by devotion and fascination, such as few could resist, to yield her young, loving heart into the keeping of one who knew little of the ardor of her passionate nature. That he felt much tenderness for his young *protégé*, he realized; and that she amused, and at times bewitched him, he felt conscious, with her rich and early-matured charms; but he had seen too much of beauty, and been too much under the wiles of the most accomplished of her sex, to surrender his heart to one he deemed a child, or

to believe that she could ever exercise over him, more captivating influence. While she silently listened, he talked to her of his hopes for the future, and told her it was the desire of his heart that she should be ever near him ; that he had no relative, and that until he married, he should need some young and sweet companion, like his own Flora ; and that he was sure he could find some way to make her entirely happy. "What kind of a wife," he continued, "would you choose for me, Flora ? You must be consulted, for you must be always with us."

"She ought to be very lovely," said Flora, her eyes averted.

"Oh, of course !" said her guardian ; "I mean that Mrs. Clarendon shall look well, in her carriage, and at the head of my table. She must have an unexceptionable address—not too fascinating but enough so to save me anxiety in the reception of my guests. In short, she must be *comme il faut*, whether her eyes are black, blue or green. She must have no vulgar relations, and must be able to trace her pedigree at least to her third grandfather. Not that I am so fond of lordly descent, but pride sits well on a married woman—keeps *parvenues* at a distance. Yes, yes, Flora, Mrs. Clarendon must be a queen of a woman. Don't you think so, little violet ?"

"I should think," replied Flora, "she would be almost too proud to love."

"*Love!* oh ! I shall like her, if she figures well, a dignified, elegant woman always does this. How fatigued you look, Flora—this ride and visit have been too much for you, I will come again, and try to make you happier—I hate to leave you confined at school, and yet I know it is best at present. I must have a governess for you at home ; and then I can have my little ward with me many, many evenings, when we won't have even Sappho with us ; and we will read together, and have our concerts, and you shall then sing me to sleep—I can hardly wait for the term to close—I have but one objection to my plan," he continued, "I shall have many gentlemen at my house, clubs, whist-parties, suppers, dinners, &c., from which, of course, you must be excluded. Can you be invisible ? will you always stay with old Duenna ? What is your choice, Flora, to live with me, or remain at school ?"

Poor Flora was bewildered ; her guardian had pictured to

her a paradise, and asked her to enter it. Flora thought he could not err—he was her idol, and her guide. She felt that to be with him, to devote herself to him, was all that she could ask of earth, but the wife he talked of—she was ten thousand Sapphos! But as yet, this imaginary woman was not present; and when he uttered his expressions of endearment, Flora believed that she would never appear. But while she mused, the magnificent vision in the guise of a court beauty, that her guardian had met abroad, was in *her* favorite place; she had *her* seat in the dear old library, while, like Sappho, she was turned out. The question of her companion remained unanswered, while her head drooped over some flowers she held in her hand.

“What do you say, Flora,” questioned Mr. Clarendon. His face drew nearer to hers—his hand rested upon the fingers that thrilled beneath it. Her eyes fell momentarily upon his, as she replied.

“Who else can I go to? you are my guardian.”

“True—Flora. I am your guardian; your mother gave you to me, for—my sister. So when the term closes, you shall come *home*, Flora. I shall have something then to live for; a cheerless place is a bachelor's home—but we must have a governess, Flora—that, I must look to immediately.”

So the guardian and ward dreamed happily of the future, but talked less than they had done of their plans. Their thoughts grew more absorbing, the nearer they approached the now odious school, where Flora was yet for three months to be left.

CHAPTER V.

Why did she love him? curious fool, be still;—
Is human love, the growth of human will?

BYRON.

“IF you wish to engage my services for your ward,” said Mrs. Linden to Mr. Clarendon, “it must necessarily be without explanation, on my part, of the peculiar circumstances which compel me to apply for the situation. I will devote myself to her education, on the terms you propose, for the sake

of a secluded home ; but I frankly state to you, that I have not long taught, and that I may be deficient in such accomplishments as you may require in a governess."

"My ward has a fair education already, for her years," replied Mr. Clarendon, "and I consider you well calculated to complete it. I wish a companion for Miss Islington, as well as a governess ; and therefore seek a lady whose manners and address please me. You can have your own apartments, free of intrusion ; and the entire direction of her education and the formation of her character. Your misfortunes are a matter of no curiosity, or especial interest to me—no questions shall be asked respecting them ; and your wishes shall be regarded in such matters, as I can control—presuming that you will be somewhat indulgent to the whims of an old housekeeper. I shall only require the society of your pupil, at evening. Her days will be devoted to you, in your own apartments.

"I should prefer her to study at evening," replied Mrs. Linden.

"I shall then have most leisure," answered Mr. Clarendon, "and shall wish her with me. Other arrangements I leave with you. You will come, madam, immediately, if agreeable."

Mrs. Linden bowed with dignity, giving her assent, rather in her manner than in words. Mr. Clarendon was somewhat puzzled with the lady's reserve and hauteur ; but, on the whole, was pleased with her deportment. He saw that she was a well-bred woman, yet handsome, and who might be attractive, under favorable circumstances ; and he had reason to suppose that necessity had driven her to seek a livelihood.

Delicacy forbade him to intrude into her motives for the application, satisfied that she would be sufficiently agreeable to please Flora.

The lady accordingly took possession of her rooms in a retired wing of Mr. Clarendon's house, with her young pupil, who greeted her with the usual reserve she manifested towards strangers. The tirade of Benson against governesses in general, and of this one in particular, was still fresh in Flora's mind ; the housekeeper's keen observation having already detected that she was of the disagreeable and meddling sort.

The sad, almost haughty beauty of Mrs. Linden's countenance, at first awed Flora, who shrunk coldly from her, and

timidly presented her hand, when introduced by her guardian to her new governess. Mrs. Linden's greeting was kind but somewhat cold ; and little confidence was at first awakened between the two strangers, who were to be the inmates of the same room, and companions for an indefinite period.

Flora had parted with her teachers and schoolmates with regret ; though with gay and buoyant spirits she entered her guardian's home ; and not until the arrival of the stranger governess was her happiness marred. Like a child, she had run about the house, examining, with Sappho in close pursuit, each nook and corner, even clapping old Benson's back in her delight, who tried to look mad, but couldn't, at her wild freaks. Her exuberant spirits elated Mr. Clarendon, who frolicked with her with unrestrained gaiety, her romps usually ending with a quiet *tête-à-tête* in the library, where with books and music, they together passed the evening.

Flora too, had many delightful drives with her guardian, and a pony for her own especial use, trained for the saddle. Her wild freedom for a month, little prepared her for the restraint of study hours and a governess ; but with the necessity the love of study returned, and she entered upon her new duties with cheerfulness.

Mrs. Linden was dressed in deep weeds, with a widow's cap closely fitted to her face, just discovering the dark chestnut hair beneath ; this was simply parted on a high, open brow, yet unfurrowed, although evidently clouded by grief. She rarely smiled, but when her lips parted they disclosed teeth of regularity and beauty. Her profile was severe and classical, giving one rather the impression of pride than humility ; an impression strengthened by her bearing, and dignified carriage.

Mrs. Linden was, however, unobtrusive and reserved in her manners, and especially calculated to please Mr. Clarendon, from her secluded habits and aversion to observation. She preferred to have a private table, her pupil dining and taking tea with her, and appearing only at breakfast with her guardian ; a meal which he enjoyed exclusively with her, while she poured his coffee, and chatted with him in her guileless, fascinating manner, sometimes to the imminent danger of his neglecting more important engagements. Still, her society could not be dispensed with ; and though he protested, she was as likely to salt as to sweeten his cup, and was sure to give him muffins

when he wanted toast, and to commit all sorts of unpardonable blunders in table etiquette ; yet she was before him in her rich young beauty, and whether her eye brightly sparkled, or melted in liquid softness, or whether her lip pouted in pretty willfulness, or curled with its own peculiar smile—breakfast was no meal without her. Still Benson declared that “ the breakfast was nothing but child’s play, with so much nonsense and foolery—flowers on the table, and a child rattling among the cups and coffee-pots ; and that one would think by the fuss Mr. Louis made over the girl, that he hadn’t seen her for a month, instead of sitting with her all the evening, till the lady governess ordered her to bed—the best thing she ever did, in her line.”

But Benson’s scoldings, and Mrs. Linden’s reproachful looks when Flora lingered too long in the library, or sat too late on the balcony at night, were of little avail, while her guardian approved of the delay, and the decree that she could not leave the breakfast-table until he had left for his office, was also indisputable—so the color in Flora’s beautiful cheek but grew the brighter for an instant with the chidings she received, to soften into its own mellow hue, and happiness to resume its seat with the anticipations of renewed daily enjoyment.

Her smile became magical, also, to her governess, and although the latter never spared the reproof her indiscretion appeared to call forth, yet so much love seemed mingled with the restraint she would exercise, that Flora was rarely offended, and promised so fairly for the future, that her tact and winning ways made her empress over all about her.

Flora’s sixteenth birthday had come, and at its close, she was summoned earlier than usual from the school-room, to greet her guardian below stairs. She had anticipated some beautiful present as an accustomed anniversary gift, and received permission from her governess to go to the library, with a strict injunction to return early.

With a smile and a kiss for her governess, she bounded like a fawn over the stair-case, but as she approached the library, her footsteps were hushed, and her heart beat with fluttering joy against the little crimson boddice, where her young bosom swelled with tumultuous emotion. Was it the coming gift—the glittering cross or jewelled ring that was to grace her neck or dimpled hand, that created such a glow of excite-

ment—or was it the glance of an eye more flashing than the diamond's lustre, that made her radiant and blissful?

Flora asked not her heart the question, and he, who awaited her coming, thought as little of it. But as he heard her step, his book was thrown aside, and as she approached his table, he was ready with all, at least, of a brother's love to express his affectionate greeting.

To please her, he had brought flowers and birds into his study, and seats of luxury had found their way into a room where green baize and black walnut had before been chiefly conspicuous; and had he been told that he was turning the old family library into a lady's boudoir, he would himself have doubted the assertion. But here he was now accustomed to sit, by star and moonlight, with his young loving Flora, while she sang her wild, rich songs; and how, he asked himself, could he make too balmy the atmosphere that his syren breathed?

Here, evening after evening, in her deep, starry eyes, he read the passionate emotions that poetry, music, or love's thrilling language excited; while more inseparable became the cords that linked the young girl to her fascinating, courtly guardian.

"So you have come early to-night," said the latter, as he took Flora's hand, "and what penance is to be inflicted for the pleasure afforded me?"

"Oh! none," said Flora, smiling, "only that I must return earlier. Mrs. Linden does not like to have me come down so much, nor stay so long. She says that I must remain with her, and that she will read to amuse me at evening."

"And what does Lady Benson say?"

"She says"—Flora laughed musically—"if she had her way, that I should be put to bed by eight o'clock; and more than this, she wants me to wear a silk net over my head, tied with a tassel behind, to make me look more *tidy*; she says my curls are a great annoyance to her."

"So they are to me, you gipsy—always flying in my face, and covering up my page—like the feathers of a bird of paradise—and you are, moreover, one of that species yourself—don't you think so?"

He pressed her hand affectionately, and drew her towards

him more confidently, while the guardian continued his questions.

"And Benson says, too," replied Flora "that she never knew any good come out of 'heathen books,' such as we read together."

"Ha! ha! puss, does she call my books heathen? And so with my lady Dorothy and the lady Abbess, I am to lose my little nun altogether—they had better be wary, or I will scale the fortress and carry her off. Pray what do they propose for *my* amusement till ten o'clock?"

"They don't think of that," said Flora, artlessly. "See how beautifully the sun is setting; it comes through that stained window like a thousand rainbows. How I should love to see it go down among the hills and trees, and gild the water, making the ripples flash and sparkle, as I used to watch it on the Arno, in our old gondola."

"You shall, some time, my little dreamer. Are you not happy now? Life seems all *couleur de rose* to you anywhere. I would give all I am worth for your wild, joyous spirits."

"I am happy *now*, oh! yes, *very happy*—because, when I am with you, I never think of the past or of the future. But Mrs. Linden says that I am too thoughtless—that I mustn't live for the present alone—that I must have some purpose in life, besides self-gratification; but I do not mean to be selfish; I would do much for those I love, but you won't let me work or help you. All I can do for you is to water your flowers, and feed Sappho, light your cigar, comb your hair, bathe your head when it aches"——

"And put pepper instead of sugar into my tea, and bother me morning, noon, and night, either by coming or not coming to see me—blinding my eyes with your curly hair—in short, you are perfectly useless, and yet, like the summer breeze that plays its pranks over garden and hill-tops, and steals with its mischievous breath among my papers, blowing them hither and thither, so my little Flora comes on her rosy wings to my side, to lull and charm my existence."

"But I will not always be such a will-of-the-wisp. I am sixteen to-day, older than dear mamma when she was married."

"Are you *sure* of this, Flora," said Mr. Clarendon in a low tone.

"Oh! yes, mamma said so."

Flora looked very pensive as she spoke, and her guardian

observed her with intense interest—he pondered in his mind the question whether he would be willing to resign her to another's keeping. He grew jealous at the thought, and determined that she should live long yet secluded from society, for once seen by the world, he knew that he should lose her; and yet ambition was too powerful a passion with him to allow him to think of wedding her—no, Flora Islington—the daughter of a foreigner, whom he knew not—one on whom perhaps, rested the stain of illegitimacy, could never be his wife. Pride mastered his love for the foreign girl—and yet she was dearer to him than aught beside, and his vow to her dying mother was ever sacred in his recollection.

As the sun declined, he drew nearer to the open window, which opened upon an alcove of plants; and drawing from the table a favorite volume, told Flora to bring her low chair near him, while he would read to her an hour; and afterwards, they would have some music. To the latter this was the height of enjoyment; and when the long, troublesome hair, glossy and beautiful, was parted upon her smooth marble temples, that her guardian might watch better the soft eyes that melted as he read, she was ready to listen; and he, to draw her to his side, with increased tenderness, as she wept, sighed, or smiled, at the poet's fervent language.

In low, deep tones, Mr. Clarendon breathed into her ear Moore's harmonious numbers, until the magical silver flow carried her rapturously into regions of fairy romance, where, on rosiest wing her spirit soared, entranced alike with melody and song. With parted lips, and eyes downcast with feeling, she listened, in thrilling happiness; but as the tale grew wildly sad, pathos, fervor, and maddening passion, from the lips of the dark Mohammedan lover, now echoed in subduing tones, by the voice so dearly loved, at last overcame the youthful, sympathetic listener, and streaming tears caused the reader impetuously to dash aside his book, while with her wet eyes hid, she declared, if he would proceed, she would no longer betray such foolish weakness.

But Flora would beg in vain; the book was shut as her punishment, and she compelled to sing away her sadness. Once as her voice swelled in its richest tones, while she was again entirely happy in the devotion of her guardian, her birthday-gift was clasped on her bosom. It was a dove made of

choicest pearls, holding in its beak a tiny ring, richly set in diamonds.

The workmanship was exquisite, and the gems surpassingly brilliant. He covered it with his hand, until the song was completed, when she was allowed to see it. So, playfully, Clarendon compelled Flora to yield to his whims, until evening advanced, and its sombre shadows darkened the room. Then lights were soon brought in by Benson, who made herself busy for a longer period than was deemed necessary, in winding the clock, which somehow went ahead of all city time; a fitting hour it seemed also to her, to water the flowers in the alcove; and such confusion one would suppose had never before been made in chairs and tables, as her energetic setting to rights manifested, while she took care, with strict maiden propriety, that none should approach too near together—such proximity being too sociable in her discretionary views, for even four-legged black walnut.

But Miss Dorothy was hopeless in her despair of subjecting her master, or of moulding him to her circumspect views; all therefore she could do, was to superintend matters, in her own dignified, confidential manner, for which she never had reason to believe any gratitude had yet been evinced. Neither did she leave the library without keen observation of the pursuits of its occupants, even to the books perused, and the songs which were sung, and lastly, her eyes to-night settled upon the ornament resting upon the bosom of Flora, which she considered indecorous in the extreme for her to wear—indeed she objected to *bosom* pins any way. She never found any difficulty “in keeping ship shape,” she said, “with brass heads, but now-a-days girls in pantalettes must have pigeons billing on their necks, serpents twisted on their arms, and chains hanging, the Lord knows where.” And so Dorothy sighed over the degeneracy of the times, and determined to give Mrs. Linden a hint of the library doings—pigeons and all.

But ten o'clock came, when Mrs. Linden's gentle, but firm step was heard at the door of the study, and her low tap answered by the salutation of Mr. Clarendon, who always invited her to enter, which courtesy, as usual, she declined. Her coming for Flora brought the blushing girl to her side, and together they proceeded to her chamber.

Mrs. Linden received her young charge with deep and tender interest, and anxiously looked for the hour that was to

separate her from her guardian and restore her to her care. She became daily more convinced of Flora's growing passion for his society, and of his devotion to her, and yet the subject was one she felt reluctant to approach with either party. Untold sorrows had made her feel keenly for her pupil, and to apprehend for her the blight of disappointment. There was something in the character of Mr. Clarendon that made her solicitous regarding his attentions towards her; she believed him not dishonorable, but reckless of the attachment he inspired. She endeavored to spare no pains in the instruction she imparted, to cultivate in her heart a nice sense of right and wrong, and to impress upon her those great moral and religious truths, without which there is no basis to the female character.

She taught her that there was a higher and purer source of enjoyment than the love of earth or its idols could inspire, and that without the adornment of Christian graces the purest heart was like an empty casket, unfit for the temptations of the world, and unripe for heaven.

Time wore on, blissfully to the blind infatuated Flora, and pleasantly to her indulgent guardian. The professional business of Mr. Clarendon became more engrossing, and the few hours he passed with his ward more than ever precious to him. His house was frequented as usual by his bachelor friends, and though many inquiries were made for the secreted nun, she never appeared in public, excepting with himself or governess. Of society she knew nothing, or of its forms or etiquette. Mr. Clarendon preferred her as she was, natural and beautiful, without artificiality. He had no schemes for the future respecting her, and the thought of his young ward's ever inspiring an attachment among his own sex was opposed to every wish of his heart. So his bachelor friends looked in vain for the appearance of the young beauty at his dinners or *fêtes*; and, although strongly pressed by his female acquaintances for her presence at their musical soirées and parties, their invitations were ever firmly declined. He was much in society himself, and attended many brilliant festivals after his interviews with Flora, who often parted from him with tears, only consoled by the prospect of meeting him again at breakfast.

Thus a year passed away, while Flora remained under the roof of her guardian, daily improving in person and character. Under the instruction of Mrs. Linden she gained strength

of principle, and that self-reliance which fitted her for the exigencies of her fate. While her education was carefully attended to, and her mind stored with useful information, she spared no efforts to awaken her to the danger of her position, so far as her future happiness was concerned. She endeavored to impress upon her heart the fallacy of human professions, and to prepare her for the disappointment which she feared awaited her in the constancy of her guardian's love.

One lovely evening Flora sat alone in her chamber, Mr. Clarendon was absent, and had been so for several days. She seemed pensive and sad; Mrs. Linden endeavored to persuade her to walk or ride with her, but Flora declined, and moodily sat in the casement, where the moonlight streamed upon her in its full brilliancy.

Mrs. Linden came towards her, gently drew her from her resting-place, and placing her hand caressingly on her head, asked her why she was so thoughtful.

"I was thinking of my singular destiny," said Flora, with feeling. "Of my father's desertion, of my mother's death, and of my orphaned condition, and of my present home and guardianship, and what cause I have to be happy—and yet what a fearful thing it is to depend upon one being for all one's bliss in life."

"My dear Flora," said Mrs. Linden, "if you knew how my heart feels for you, how I long to give you a mother's counsel, with a mother's and a sister's love, you would not spurn it. I look upon you as standing upon a flowery precipice—I cannot avoid it—I dream of it by night, and I ponder upon it by day. I would not cause you, God knows, one pang—don't sob so, my darling—you are nervous and lonely without him. Flora, but ask your heart the question—how you could live for ever in this world without your guardian?"

"Oh! don't talk so," said Flora, with her face buried, "I should die! I should die! Why should I be separated from him? He loves me as dearly as I love him. He is miserable when I do not come to meet him, and I wish for nothing on earth but to be for ever by his side. Oh! Mrs. Linden, you try to separate us, and you will kill me by doing it. You keep me from him, and call me away, to lie and cry, because I am so fettered and restrained. I won't be so any longer. No," said she, passionately rising, "I will not be caged—I will be free!"

"Flora! Flora!" said Mrs. Linden. "It is true I have kept you much with me of late. I cannot remain with you, unless with the exercise of such authority. I know the responsibility of my situation, and before God I pray to feel it, and to do my duty towards you. I know that heaven has sent me here to guard a motherless child."

"And you cannot trust me with my *own* guardian—my best, my dearest friend?" said Florence vehemently.

"My poor child," said Mrs. Linden, tenderly disregarding the passionate language and tears of Flora, "will you confide in me wholly?—Will you tell me how far I may trust him? You say that he loves you, that he acknowledges it daily, that he is miserable without you. Flora, you are now seventeen, you are a woman in years and character, a woman in passionate feeling, and I trust one in reason and principle. Has Mr. Clarendon ever proposed to marry you?"

With a burning cheek, Flora hid her face in her hands, and remained silent. Her bosom heaved wildly, and her veins swelled with excited feeling. She soon rose from her seat, and left the room where they sat. Mrs. Linden did not follow Flora, but long after, she went to the door of her chamber, and stole quietly to her bedside. She had thrown herself upon her pillow, and still lay there, seemingly absorbed in intense thought. The traces of tears were on her cheek, but she was calm.

"Why have you come?" said she reproachfully. "I am miserable enough alone. Tell me what I must do, and if it is right, I will try to follow your advice. Tell me," said she frantically, seizing the hand of her governess, "must I leave him—go forth in this wide world alone, without a friend, without a helper?"

"You know best, Flora; you know, my dear girl, whether you can lay your hand on your heart, and, before God, say—'His love for me is pure and honorable; he has vowed to make me his honored wife, and cherish me until death.' Without this pledge you are no longer safe, and I would bid you flee while your heart is pure and sinless. I have tried to keep it so, to keep the dove of peace in your innocent bosom, and, oh, I cannot leave you until the victory is complete. I would advise you to linger no longer in the ~~deleterious~~ pernicious presence of one to whom you owe so much—the debt of obligation but increases your danger. I know that you suffer much in the

thought of separation, but delay may make your sorrow irremediable. Flora, I shall soon be obliged to leave you—I offer you a home with me.”

“And never see him again, my dear, *dear* guardian! No, no; I *cannot*. But I will see him first—I will tell him I am going away from him—that this is no home for Flora—that you say, I cannot be good and happy, if I love him so much—I will tell him that the little girl he educated shall not be unworthy of all he has done for her, and be guilty of misplacing her love on one who values it not. Oh! Yes, Mrs. Linden, pride will help me, and the principles you have taught me, will enable me, finally, to do right.”

“God grant it, my dear girl; but I fear that you cannot resist his persuasion to remain. His authority will appear to you supreme. Heaven guard and support you, my darling. Good night!”

Mrs. Linden did not go to her rest. She sat long in the moonlight, her heart agitated by the situation of Flora. She was painfully impressed. She had acted conscientiously; but she knew, that she should bring upon her own head the wrath of Mr. Clarendon. She knew that he would hate her, and execrate her name, for the influence she exerted over Flora's mind; she feared at times that she had done her guardian injustice—that he truly loved his ward, and was educating her for his wife. She finally resolved to seek him on his return, to disclose to him candidly her course, and to acquaint him with her advice to Flora. She thanked God that she had been permitted to sow in the heart of her pupil, seeds that had taken root, which might bring forth the fruit of righteousness. On her knees she prayed for guidance and wisdom to guard and direct her pupil, and that she might have grace from Heaven to enable her to resist all evil influences, and to be kept pure in the sight of God.

The following day Mr. Clarendon returned. He had been absent three days. His coming was felt to the most remote corner of the dwelling. Flora's tasks were sadly performed—she was utterly miserable, and her looks evinced it.

Word was sent Mr. Clarendon that she was ill, and could not come down to see him, but that she would endeavor to do so the following day. The latter was much excited at the news; and insisted upon seeing her in her own apartment—this proposal Mrs. Linden refused, much to his chagrin; and

with keen disappointment, he seated himself alone that evening in his library.

He heard a step, and listened. It was not Flora, but Mrs. Linden who entered his study.

He had seldom met her, and was struck with the nobility and elegance of her appearance, as she accosted him. He rose, and courteously laid aside his cigar, and inquired as to the health of her pupil.

Mrs. Linden felt the embarrassment of her situation, and the difficulty of disclosing her errand, but the sense of doing right sustained her; and she approached the subject, by speaking of the extreme sensitiveness of Flora; and that she supposed herself to be the entire cause of her illness.

"You surprise and alarm me, madam," said Mr. Clarendon.

"I fear I shall do so still more," the lady replied, "for my errand is an unpleasant and painful one; nothing but a conscientious sense of duty, and my real love for Flora, has induced me so to agitate her."

"Agitate her! madam, what have you been doing? Please preface as little as convenient."

"I have warned her of her—danger."

"*Danger!* madam. To what is she exposed?"

"To the sorrow that comes from disappointment, the anguish of a blighted heart—from this I would save her, if not from a worse fate."

"What absurd sentimentality is this, Mrs. Linden? From a weak-minded woman I might have looked for such nonsense, but in you, madam, it seems like insanity. If you refer to my ward's attachment to me, allow me, with all possible courtesy, to say to you, that such matters come not within your jurisdiction; and that I consider that, of late, you have already overstepped them, in the restraint which you have put upon Miss Islington's movements. I have never intended that she should be made a prisoner."

"Release her then, sir, from bonds which bind her stronger, than even fetters of steel. I have urged her to leave you, while she has the power to do so. I have offered her a home; there I will continue to educate her, and if, at the expiration of a few months, your judgment convinces you that she is your choice for a *wife*, I will be the last, my dear sir, to oppose you."

"Mrs. Linden," said Mr. Clarendon, pale with excitement,

"will you present me with your bill this evening? and relieve me henceforth from the presence of one, who has grossly insulted me. Miss Islington is no longer your pupil, and I as her guardian forbid you to have further intercourse with her." Mr. Clarendon then turned abruptly, and left the library. Mrs. Linden passed out of the opposite door to her own chamber. A servant soon after entered the apartment of Flora with a message from her guardian, summoning her to his presence in the parlor.

Flora sought Mrs. Linden, whose step she had heard entering her room.

"Shall I go?" said she, clasping the hand of her governess.

"I can no longer control you, my dear; I shall leave you to-night, go, if you wish."

"You have been weeping, my dear friend," said Flora, tenderly.

"My tears are for you, my love—may Heaven guard you! go to him, and forgive the pain I have caused you. Before you return, I shall have gone. Here is my address, reveal it to no one. If I can ever befriend you, come to me. And now, farewell!"

Flora flew to the arms of her governess, and tore herself in sorrow away. She was soon in the presence of her guardian. They had not met for several days, and now Flora approached the latter, pale and tearful. He had rarely seen her thus; he knew the cause of her sorrow, and clasped her fervently to his heart.

"She would tear you away from me! my own! my darling! But she has gone away—the Gorgon!—and you shall be prisoner no longer—but mine—*mine*, my precious Flora!"

"Oh, my dear guardian," sobbed the wretched girl, "don't blame her, she is so good, and means to spare me suffering. She has opened my eyes to my true position, and I know now that I shall not always be dear to you, and that another will come and fill my place in your heart, who will be bound to you by the holiest vows, such as cannot be broken, and then where will poor discarded Flora stand? Oh, yes; let me go before then: the struggle has cost me much, but the worst is over."

"How like a foolish child you talk," said Mr. Clarendon,

clasping the hand of Flora, "this woman has crazed you. Didn't your mother give you to me, with her last breath?"

"Oh! yes; and you have been good to me, so good—my heart breaks when I think of it all; but she did not know what a foolish heart her poor little Flora had—how dearly it could love. Oh, my dear guardian, if you were not so kind to me, I could better leave you."

"Leave me! you *shall* not! by all that is great and good! I will lock you up, before I will suffer you to go off unprotected. What do I know of this woman who would steal you from me?—the artful wretch! She has given you more sorrow than you have known for years. But she has gone now; and there is no one left to take you from me, my little innocent one! Why, it is but a short time since you feared me no more than Sappho, and now this wise governess would fill your head with villainous nonsense."

"Oh, no; she is right—I must go away from you; and, if you really love me, we shall meet again; and, if you don't, and another comes here to more than fill my place, why then it will be better that I am gone."

"*Really* love you! Flora, you know I do—madly love you—as I never shall another being."

"And yet?"

"What? Flora, be free—wholly frank in all you say—there is no one now to disturb us."

"I have nothing to say. I know that I am naught in your estimation but a little foreign girl, without friends or relations—that you pity more than love me. But, oh! still I am proud—too proud to hold a *second* place in your love. Now I have said *all*—more than I thought I could," murmured Flora, as she hid her face in her hands.

"You are a strange girl. Why do you talk to me of one I may yet marry? Supposing I should, need she wholly occupy my heart?"

"Not *your wife*?" said Flora, with startling earnestness.

"Don't let us talk of such tame subjects, Flora; forget these days of sorrow, and again amuse yourself. You are wholly mistress now, and can be with me at every meal—at all times, when you please. I will not leave you so often."

The pallor of Flora's cheek momentarily increased; faintness crept stealthily over her; the excitement of the conversa-

tion had been more than her frame could bear ; and she sank upon the arm of her guardian, senseless and death-like.

With intense alarm, he laid her upon the sofa, and called for Benson to come to his aid. The latter immediately obeyed, and with her strong arm attempted to lift Flora from her position, to carry her into the air.

"Give her to me," said Clarendon, pushing Benson aside.

"The best you can do is to go to your tea, and send Jessie in. She will come to, I'll warrant, after you are gone. If she'd been sitting with me, I reckon, she wouldn't a-fainted. Pretty business this !"

"She seems better now. Handle her gently, Benson."

"Will you please go to your tea ? I know how to cure faints : send in a feather and some vinegar. No use, I tell you, in fanning the breath out of her, nor dashing water on her, either. If I could raise her, so as to let her breathe a little, she'd do well enough."

"Benson, if you manage in that rough way, I'll order you out of the room. She does not need your aid ; and you shall not lay another finger on her. Leave her to me ; she's reviving now. Are you better, Flora ?" said Clarendon, holding some wine to her lips.

"Yes—oh, yes ; let me go to my room," murmured the languid girl.

"Yes, that's the best place for her," said Benson. "I'll help her along."

But before Benson could approach Flora, her guardian had lifted her, and carried her to her own apartment, where he ordered a waiting-maid to be sent to her assistance.

Mr. Clarendon had been much alarmed and disturbed by recent events, and deeply chagrined at Flora's threats of leaving him, which he greatly feared she would put in execution. He could not rest until he had again seen her, and received her promise of remaining with him as she had done.

But when he met her the following day, the change in Flora deeply alarmed him ; there was no excitement in her manner, but decision and courage seemed to have overcome feeling, and her tones now were calm and placid as her brow.

"May I leave you," said her guardian, "with no fears of any mad elopement, and with the assurance, that you will be rational and happy once more ?"

"Yes, I will be rational and happy, and never more grate-

ful than in the hour that I bid you adieu—for my resolution is formed. I will become independent, and you shall at least respect the daughter of my poor lost mother—her whose last hours you soothed—whose grave you honored, and whose little orphan child you reared and educated—and who learned to love you—too—*too well*! Thanks, too, to the kind governess you placed over me, I have been led to a sense of my duty, and have been enabled through God, to bid you farewell. I shall go to her—and will sometimes write to you.” The tears of Flora now choked her words, and her guardian who had silently listened, replied as feelingly.

“If you *will* go, Flora, I shall not longer bid you stay—but remember, if you desert me, that you alienate my heart *for ever*. I have loved you—I *do* love you to idolatry, Flora, but it is with no boy’s love—to bear caprice and folly. Be mine, and you have my worship—love me, and I will idolize you—but desert me, and I will no more heed you than the stranger that passeth by my door—choose then for the last time—go to your friend, whom you know not but as my enemy, or abide by one who has guarded and protected you in infancy—worshiped you in girlhood—and who will adore you as a woman. Choose, Flora, and that quickly,” said her guardian, while his lips whitened, as he bent his eyes upon the pale, statue-like girl.

“I must go,” said Flora, in a low, but steady voice.

“Did you hear me?” said he again, hastily, while he kept an earnest gaze upon her.

“I did,” she murmured.

Louis Clarendon rose and left the house. Before he returned, a carriage had borne Flora from his home.

CHAPTER VI.

As rolls the ocean's changing tide,
So human passions ebb and flow.

BYRON.

MR. CLARENDON returned to his residence at a late hour ; until midnight he paced his study, in such bitterness and grief as he had never known. He felt himself deeply wronged, purloined of a treasure he valued beyond gold ; and he considered Mrs. Linden the one who had designedly robbed him. He had viewed Flora as bound to him by ties too strong to be severed ; and now arbitrarily condemned her, as heartless and ungrateful. He knew not until she fled, how passionately he loved her, and how desolate was his home, without her glad, free, joyous presence. Like a dove with out-stretched wings, she had ever flown to his bosom, and now he could hear nothing but her low, plaintive, sad notes, as she winged herself in sorrow away. He knew that she would droop—perhaps die, without him ; and as days passed, and he missed her more painfully, at times he would vow to seek and wed her. But with each year that passed over his head, he had grown more ambitious for worldly distinction. He had powerful rivals who tried to crush him ; and the sneers that often met his ears, respecting his mysterious *protégé*, whom the world looked upon as the illegitimate offspring of an Italian, and unknown by her own sex, save for her extraordinary beauty, and well-known musical talents, embarrassed him in view of a matrimonial connection with her. Flora was not educated for society ; and he well knew that her secluded tastes and habits, and her aversion to strangers, would unfit her for the position his wife must assume in the fashionable world ; and that were she free and social, with her surpassing loveliness and freedom of manner, he should become jealous of the admiration and attention she would receive. For months he was perplexed,

and harassed, with conflicting interests—his love bade him seek his beautiful lost Flora, but his pride and ambition, to forget her, and in fame and distinction to seek that aggrandizement for which his self-love panted.

He had long wished to marry; he knew that he was now more free to act as his judgment dictated—unembarrassed by the idolatry of one, whose heart would be crushed by such an event, while she remained an inmate of his home. Away, she might forget him—perhaps, love another. The last reflection was painful in the extreme. Thus months of indecision, and unhappiness, passed away; while Mr. Clarendon found relief only in his professional duties, which grew more arduous and engrossing. He still had his dinners, and bachelor clubs, and mingled more than ever at night in the gayest circles of the metropolis, and his devotion to many elegant women caused successive rumors to arise respecting his matrimonial intentions; and not unfrequently had his secret choice been made for a mistress of his home; but when on the eve of a proposal to the stylish belle, who had dazzled him, his disgust was invariably excited by a display either of heartlessness, or of weakness of intellect, on the lady's part, that unfitted her, in his fastidious taste, to be the companion of his life. The freshness and purity of Flora's mind and character, with her youthful charms, surpassed, in his estimation, the interested fashionable woman, who, his discerning glance detected, had an eye to his purse and his position, as well as to his personal qualities.

A year finally passed away—he had but once heard from Flora. Her letter was touching and grateful, but firm in her decision to abandon him—she bade him think of her as a sister who would cherish the memory of all his kindness to her. Her words were brief but sad; she spoke affectionately of Mrs. Linden, and sent her love to Benson, and “dear old Sappho.”

Mr. Clarendon's reply was equally brief. He simply begged her to accept a sum due her as a fulfillment of the trust reposed in him by her mother—which would relieve her at least from actual want. No word of love accompanied the note.

The draft was returned with many thanks, and confidence expressed that she would not suffer pecuniarily. Thus coolly closed the intercourse between Flora and her guardian; while the latter plunged heartlessly into the gayest vortex of

dissipation, though he daily sickened of the hollowness and insincerity of the world's professions, and never sighed more earnestly for the truth and pure affection of a guileless heart, than when he bowed with courtly gallantry at the shrine of the ambitious and worldly.

Flora had, in the meanwhile, sought a home in a retired street of the city with her old governess, to whom she became daily more endeared. She was extremely ill for weeks after the abandonment of her guardian, and when she deliriously raved of him, Mrs. Linden was ever at her side, to soothe and calm her. The latter's sufferings were also extreme—aside from her own untold trials, she knew that she had been the cause of much sorrow, and had excited the bitter enmity of Mr. Clarendon.

The intercourse of Flora with her friend was much clouded by the mysterious silence of the latter relating to her own history, also the secrecy of her movements, and her frequent abandonment of her home for an indefinite period, when she would return with renewed spirits. She preferred sleeping alone, and Flora knew that there were hours when her privacy could never be intruded upon; but her rapid step could be heard pacing the floor in her seclusion; and at night, wild sobs would often come from her breast, which Flora heard with sympathy and tears. But the morning showed her ever calm and serene, and ready to devote herself affectionately to the happiness of Flora. But she tried in vain to restore her pupil's old cheerfulness. She could never be persuaded to look into a book which she had read with her guardian; and if she commenced a song which she had sung with him, her utterance would fail, and with uncontrolled anguish she would flee to her chamber and weep; but Mrs. Linden exerted herself strongly with Flora to occupy her mind and body, and allowed her so little opportunity for silent grief, that her health escaped material suffering. She taught her to look to the example of One who had suffered and died for her, to throw the burden of sin and sorrow upon Him, and to receive consolation in that love which knows no change, and which would reward her for acting conscientiously at the cost of so much sacrifice.

Her cheek was paler than formerly, but she grew even more beautiful. Her form expanded to perfect symmetry, it became tall and full, with grace and elasticity. The expression of her large eyes was mournful and melting; their radiance had in a

measure softened, and her smile was no longer glad ; but none looked upon her face that did not turn again. Mrs. Linden's frequent absences from home rendered her necessary as an assistant in her household matters, and Flora learned to become useful and energetic in the performance of daily duty. She manifested the same reluctance to the society of strangers that had characterized her as a child, consequently few knew the once petted ward of Louis Clarendon.

CHAPTER VII.

A lovely being scarcely formed or moulded,
A rose with its sweetest leaves yet folded.

BYRON.

"**H**AVE you come for me papa ?" said Cora Livingston, half reproachfully to her father, while she put back from her temples the silken curls that had there clustered for sixteen years, first in short fleecy ringlets, now grown into long rich waves, every one as bright as a sunbeam. She stood upon a high ledge of rocks, which formed a bluff upon the bank of the Hudson.

Cora's home was above this ledge, to which she had roved near sundown : whither since a child she had been accustomed to ramble, not so much like a mountain goat as formerly, but still with a step as free as the roving spirit that went down into the water for river gods, and up through the silver-tinted clouds for angels ; while every nook, dell and dingle, contained in her fancy a troop of fairies, and a spot for a mid-summer night's dream.

"I have found such a nice seat here," she continued, "among the rocks, and have enjoyed my book the better for it. 'Undine' is fanciful enough to make me half wish myself a water-spirit, that I might go under the waves and witch about as she did."

"One element," answered her father, "seems to me space enough for a crazy girl to witch in. We will return now ; I

have come for you, so you must finish your book on your return home."

The sun was going down behind the green hills, rising from the flood, covering them with a golden light, while around the hill-tops lay crimson and purple clouds, fading as the rose-tinted cheek fades with the coming night of years. And as the shades of evening fell, and the summer air grew chill, stars came glittering on the water as well as on the sky. Calmly, meanwhile, flowed the majestic stream through its picturesque pathway, slowly, peacefully, as if reluctant to roll onward and leave behind such wild magnificence.

Cora took the arm of her father, her eyes gazing in delight through the blue haze of evening over hill-top and water, to the red light in the west. From the sky's varying hues she looked long and earnestly through the green valley, where hazel copse, and tufted banks of moss, lined their pathway, and away in the misty air, over waving elms, tall pines, and arching willows, to the clovery shade of her own dear home. But the gathering shadows came thicker, and paler faded the ruddy sky, the dews of evening dropt silently, and the evening breeze sunk into a breathless calm. Cora and her father walked on leisurely, lulled by the peacefulness of nature. Never sung the whippowill more clear and shrill, the lantern-fly never spread his wings more glitteringly, softly bright. So Cora thought, and like a night fairy she looked in that rich twilight.

Cora seemed younger than she really was ; and she had so stealthily crept up to her father's shoulder that he viewed her still as a child, though leaf after leaf of his flowret had expanded, until the bud was fully open. The father and daughter afforded a contrast that an artist would have eagerly looked upon, as they wandered in their leafy pathway towards their cottage in the woods : the one, an ethereal vision, the other, a face repelling in its expression of haughtiness and pride ; and yet, smiles came over the latter of even feminine fondness, as he looked upon his only child, and marvelled at her enthusiasm about a "hot buggy night."

In these days of rapid locomotion, it is fairly to be presumed that the reader has viewed the banks where, at the period of our tale, our wanderers are treading ; and that the same eye has rested on the costly edifices of architectural elegance that ornament the landscape, as the traveller nears the great metro-

polis of our country upon these noted waters. Little can be added to the glowing descriptions so often furnished by the historian, novelist, and poet, whose legends are associated with sublimity and beauty; and enchanting scenery, if not rendered famous by classic story, is unrivalled in imposing grandeur and picturesque wildness in both the old world and the new. The snow-clad mountains of Switzerland, the castled heights of the Rhine, where vineyards and antique edifices rise in superb majesty on crags and rocky battlements, may awaken more interest in the lover of historic lore; but, to the naturalist, who has an eye solely to the glory and beauty of nature, nothing can outvie the everlasting magnificent hills of the Hudson, with its precipitous Highlands and undulating shores. But, searching must be the eye that peers far in among the wooded hills, to reach the little embosomed cottage of Edward Livingston—nestled in its ambush of green, within a distant view of bolder scenery—the commencement of the Highlands.

The deep blue of evening as yet but sheds a glory over the landscape, revealing indistinctly its vine-wreathed pillars, now sweet with honeysuckles, and gay with the many shaded petals of the prairie-rose. Time had somewhat marred the pristine purity of its exterior, and the lack of expenditure in its outward adorning was obvious in its blinds of faded green, and somewhat dilapidated roof, that sloped towards the garden; yet, but one view was needed of its grounds to show the love of its proprietor for the beautiful things of nature. The cottage was now overhung with towering branches, musical with birds; and the wide lawn, which extended towards the river, showed many a brilliant bud and blossom which studded its deep velvet green. The spot was now fragrant as a bower, causing Cora, as she approached it, to remark on its secluded beauty.

"It is natural, my daughter," said the Colonel, as he was familiarly called in the neighborhood, "that you should be attached to your birth-place; I wish I had known no other home, and that I could banish the desire for my own; but I am not one easily to forget old memories, or old injuries."

Cora looked up timidly and inquiringly, while her father continued.

"You see Mr. Wilton's place among the willows in the distance—over the buckwheat-field, beyond the poplar grove, on an eminence—you have often spoken of its beauty, but perhaps

never knew that that was your grandfather's homestead—your father's birth-place—the home of my childhood—my rightful inheritance, with all its broad lands. Every tree that waves over its once-honored roof was sacred to my parents ; there I passed my boyhood, and had my boy-dreams ; there I last remember my mother ; and there lie the ashes of my family : but, Cora, it is no longer mine."

"I have heard little of this, papa," said Cora ; "but I like our home the best. I would not exchange it for 'the Park.'"

"Your mother loved our little cottage, too—our place was named for her—but she did not live to enjoy it long. She died at your birth, and left you my only solace. And you have grown up—not very high yet—sadly educated, I fear, for the reverses of life. Cora, you ought to have been rich—heiress to a handsome estate ; but, through fraud, you have been wronged out of it. But you are simple as a buttercup, my daughter, and have little regret, I suppose, for your loss."

"Would riches make us much happier, papa ? For the love of travel, I think I might crave wealth. I should like to go all over the world—on the deep green sea—on the wide blue ocean—and visit the tropics, and see the gorgeous magnificent flowers that grow there ! the stupendous trees, too, with their broad green shelter, and the beautiful insects and brilliant birds and fireflies ; and I should like to see Italian sunsets, and to clamber over the mountains of Switzerland, to the very highest peak. I sometimes dream about these things, and, in imagination, I visit all the world ; and then I am crazed with my wanderings, and come home to our little nest in the woods, and think I would not give it for a castle on the Rhine, or the prettiest vineyard in Italy ; and, if tropical birds are more brilliant than ours, they don't sing so sweetly, and there is beauty enough everywhere, if we will only look for it."

"If bugs and birds, child, are all you wish wealth for," said the Colonel with a smile, "I will cease to repine for you. Wouldn't you like to go to Scotland, the land of your forefathers, and to live in the style that your ancestors did ? They say that pride is your father's weakness—they call me an aristocrat—but pride and poverty are poor companions, my daughter, and in this democracy-levelling government one might as well be at the foot as at the top of the hill. But oppression and injustice it is hard to suffer. Talk of equality ! *Might is*

right—and money is the touchstone. Who is that approaching us, Cora? He meets Mr. Wilton—a stranger I fancy.”

It was now nearly dark, and would have been quite so, but for the light of a crescent moon just becoming visible, and so the curious gaze of Cora, and the faint blush upon her cheek, was unobserved.

They both entered the gate of the dwelling in a thoughtful mood. Colonel Livingston's eye was still roving in the direction of Mr. Wilton's, and Cora's musings were so vague, it would have been difficult to locate them. She was observant of her father's gloom, and deeply solicitous when he suffered depression, but sanguinely hoped to cheer back his usual spirits. She knew her father's peculiar moods and whims, for they had been her study since a child, and she was peculiarly sensitive to the pleasure or the pain they caused her.

After ordering tea she lighted the evening lamp, and, as the night air was damp, gave directions for a fire on the hearth, though the June roses were blooming. Cora knew what her father liked, and that the almanac seasons affected his judgment little, regarding the period for fires to begin or end; and as the air grew chill, she found that she had not erred, an approval also testified by the cat, as she purred lazily upon the rug, and little Frisk by the energetic wag of his tail, as they both curled up on soft places before the blazing, crackling cinders.

The old arm-chair was soon wheeled up, the evening papers collected, and more business dispatched in a short space of time than one would have supposed the same little fingers, and volatile brain, could have together accomplished. But where another's happiness was concerned, and that one her dear and only parent, Cora knew no task too great for her to perform; and though everything seemed to go wrong, even to the kitchen, tea was ready in season, and the toast prepared to the very shade of brownness her somewhat irritable father required.

Cora knew little of the science of music, and was no professed singer, but she had a way of warbling that was always sweet to her father. It seemed, he said, like robin's music at break of day. And to-night she seemed full of it, as she flitted about the house, humming a little on the piano, arranging the ice on the butter—the toast straight on the table, that the Irish girl always stood diagonally—and herself adjusting the cherry radishes and pepper-grass—which task she liked to per-

form—always discarding the onions that the housekeeper placed beside them.

But as Cora knew that her father liked the last, she resolved that to-night nothing should be denied him, so the odoriferous vegetable, which has made for ever renowned the village of Wethersfield of good old Connecticut, was permitted a place along-side of the ruby radishes, that lay like red rose buds in their ambush of green.

But her warbling finally ceased, and the Colonel knew that tea was ready, if the fragrance near him had not already revealed it. He did not speak, but half smiled at her attempt to please his palate. Cora was a young housekeeper, and had only quite lately assumed the right to pour tea for her father, but her proposal meeting the approbation of Mrs. Jonson, the woman who occupied a midway position between the kitchen and parlor, she commenced the performance of the duty.

Mrs. Jonson was a lady—so she called herself—and made of “as good flesh and blood” as anybody; and “liked staying at Captain Livestone’s,” because there seemed to her a chance of here asserting her equality. She knew better than to present herself at table, but still as there was no interdict for her absence, and no mistress but a *child* to rule, she did not therefore feel that her dignity was weakened by her situation; and, in order to raise her importance with the servants, and to show her quality, she would on sundry occasions seat herself with a private slice on one corner of the half cleared board, and eat her repast in the coolest manner—a liberty which she was discreet enough to take while the Colonel was smoking on the piazza. But to-night Cora was in great favor with the upper servant, in consequence of the *début* of onions at table, and, therefore, she suddenly approved of her superintendence to a degree in domestic affairs, even exhibiting her good nature, by taking a highly-flavored favorite herself from the Colonel’s private dish, by way of trial, after tea.

But the repast over, the Colonel sunk into his previous depressed mood, and Cora’s efforts to please were vain, and the tears finally started to her eyes, when she not only witnessed her father’s sadness, but ill-humor, which he evinced by kicking her little dog from a most unobtrusive corner on the rug, to so near a proximity to the hot tongs as to cause such yelpings and piteous whines, as were decidedly exciting and painful to his tender-hearted mistress.

After this incident, Cora vanished, and though there was not light enough for her to read a shop-sign, if there had been one in view, she seemed for a time much occupied with a book of poems on the door-step. But after awhile, with a sigh and a light step, she went within, and seated herself by a lamp to work a pair of slippers for her father, which attracted Mrs. Jonson's notice, who the next day sent to town for worsteds, and commenced a pair for herself, which pattern pleased her much, and which promised to turn out something between a bug and a small mouse, on a pink ground.

Cora liked sympathy from any source to-night ; and consequently encouraged Mrs. Jonson in her plans, and promised to work the horns and tail of the animal for her.

But as the ambitious domestic retreated on the sudden entrance and stare of the Colonel, Cora was left by herself—her soft, light ringlets shading her cheek, which to-night was more like a snow-drop than a rose.

To an observer, it might seem a pity that such beautiful blue eyes should be dimmed with tears, but they would come occasionally, causing her the loss of a gay-looking stitch. Her father's gloom had much saddened her. In the meanwhile, he continued to walk the room, his head down, and his hands behind him. And so the pacing kept up, until Cora grew more nervous, and finally threw down her crewels, and putting her head upon the table, actually cried.

"Cora, my daughter," said the Colonel, stopping, "what is the matter?—you are foolish to injure your eyes sewing so much with that red yarn. What is it all worth? Are you really crying, Cora?"

The Colonel laid his hand upon his daughter's head, and urged her to look up.

"Oh ! I don't know, papa, but *you* feel bad to-night."

"Oh ! no, child—not much"—said the Colonel, trying to be brisk, "I was thinking—that is all. I will go to bed—where's Mrs. Jonson? Isn't she a very fussy woman? very meddlesome? Does she know her place, my daughter? new servants are troublesome. If she has airs, she *can't stay*—order lights, child."

Cora did as she was bid, when her father drew her towards him, kissed her affectionately, and told her again not to spoil her eyes, that he was poor company for her, but hoped to feel better in the morning. She then bade him a sad good night, and went to her chamber.

Before seeking her rest, she took from a drawer her mother's picture—a little miniature which showed her own soft eyes, and gleaming, sunny hair ; and now Cora's pensive expression made the resemblance stronger. She sighed to think that she had never known the love of the original, and laid it away with glistening tears. She then read from the Bible, which had been the dying gift of her mother, and perused the pencilled lines in it written by the fingers now lifeless. These she read nightly, and retired, feeling that there was one angel-spirit in Heaven, who watched over her. The hour of midnight came, before Colonel Livingston slept, his mind constantly dwelling upon his reduced circumstances ; and filled with bitterness towards him whom he considered the ruiner of his fortunes.

He thought with humiliation of his limited means, and of the influence of the man daily rising through the talisman of wealth, to which he considered himself entitled ; while he was embarrassed even to maintain a comfortable living, in the style which he considered befitting a gentleman—a situation especially mortifying to a man of unbounded pride, who had the double trial of being poor, with the painful dread of his poverty being known. Consequently, expenses were incurred, upon a credit fast failing, and servants maintained for the sake of appearances, who took little interest in economizing behind the cupboard for outward display. Thus heavy debts were oppressing the once proud heir of the large estate left by his father, which had passed out of his hands.

The visionary hope of finally recovering this property, gave a death-blow to his natural energy of character, and prevented his following any active pursuit, that would afford him a competence. Consequently, he subsisted upon the remnant of a small estate left him by his wife, the cottage of Villacora constituting a part of it.

On these matters, the Colonel ruminated to a late hour ; while his daughter closed her eyes, lightly and peacefully,—her bosom had been slightly ruffled, but, like the rays of the young moon that fell on her pillow, her spirit tranquilly reposed. She had had a delicious afternoon beside the blue waters she loved, and had richly enjoyed her book ; and though the twilight seemed to reveal but the natural beauties of a landscape, with which she was familiar ; yet to the vision had been added memories that still lingered, excited no one

exactly knew when or where, but, perhaps, in her wanderings by the water, and in the green woods, where she roamed as freely as a squirrel, and as fearless of harm. But now, as a flower closes its petals under the wing of night, so she shut up her sweet fancies, one by one, until she slept—the curl upon her cheek scarcely lifted by her breathing. The shadow that experience in life's warfare brings, had never passed over her brow, and serene as morning among her native hills, had been thus far her joyous, bird-like life. Blessed with a disposition that extracted beauty from each natural source, as freely as bees suck honey from fields of clover, she found light and fragrance in each rosy path ; and like a lark on the wing, she arose with a song on her lips. She had but recently returned from school, to finish her education at home ; and under the faithful tuition of her accomplished parent, she daily pursued her studies ; and the devoted tenderness and patience with which her father stored her young mind with knowledge, the solicitude he evinced for her gratification, in all innocent enjoyments, and the earnest look that often melted the rigidity of his stern features, as he looked upon his beautiful child, told how tenderly he loved her. The old gardener, who had plodded on for a year, with scanty pay, for the pride of the family (he had worked for the Colonel's father when a boy), loved "Little Lily," as he affectionately called Cora, as well as his favorite Japonica ; and old Sophy, the cook, who looked forward to Christmas for her earnings, believed that "Missey Cory" was "too sweet for arth," so that, with petting in the kitchen, and idolatry from her father, Cora had grown up in the lap of indulgence, totally unaware of the poverty of the purse that had from childhood supplied her wants.

Mrs. Jonson, the new-comer, had taken the place of the discouraged old housekeeper (who prudently left the family of the Colonel with some squeezed out tears, and more squeezed out dollars, on her final pay day), and knowing nothing of the low state of her employer's finances, was at present in a flattering, comfortable state of mind. She often wondered "why the Colonel brushed up his seedy coat so much, and why he didn't furnish and paint the shabby cottage, that might be such a beauty of a place," but concluded that "grand people liked old things, old chairs, and old cracked pitchers, and old pictures, better than those that looked new and shiny"—and she finally began to think that they "did look more genteel like ;" so to

be in better favor with the Colonel, she tried to make a dress for herself, like that in old Lady Livingston's portrait, out of bombazet instead of brocade—the only resemblance which she accomplished being that they both “stuck out ;” but flour in hair she never could abide, if it was “old timey ;” and as to brushing it straight up in the air, she couldn't either, for hers was a frizette, and had to be tied on. But the Colonel, unfortunately, was ignorant of Mrs. Jonson's efforts to please his “old fashioned taste,” and had little thoughts about her, excepting when her short, fat figure stood presumptuously in his way. But Cora liked her better, because she was always ready to talk to her about any of her pets, plans, or projects ; and the way she tucked her up at night, and displayed her peculiar powers of fascination, greatly amused her. Besides, Mrs. Jonson liked good things ; and was fond of private lunches ; and as she carried the keys, took advantage of the privilege, by taking, as she said, “now and then a pickle ;” but Cora wondered how she could make so many nice things out of the pickle jar, she being often invited to her bed-room to partake with her, by way of a salvo to her conscience. But the “pickle jar” daily grew astonishingly lower ; and the cook's larder scantier ; and as the Colonel's purse grew no heavier, there was little increase in anything, but in the length of his countenance. This Mrs. Jonson cared little about, presuming it was style to look sober, and “old timey” not to laugh like vulgar people, but she thought it was careless in him not to fill up the store-room better.

“She wasn't used to eking, she knew that.”

CHAPTER VIII.

— He cast
O'er erring deeds and thoughts a heavenly hue
Of words, like sunbeams, dawning as they passed.

BYRON.

MR. CLARENDON was now sailing on the tide of popularity, borne gallantly on the breeze of fame and wealth. Since Flora left him he had devoted himself more exclusively to his profession, and the reputation which he had

gained at the bar, was fully exhibited in the demand made upon his time and legal abilities. He grew daily more extravagant and voluptuous in his tastes; even the upper ten looked with amazement upon his lavish expenditure, and most sagely concluded that he was at last adorning his residence for a bride; but no fair lady appearing, he was at last permitted to enjoy his single life undisturbed by criticism, while his bachelor friends, who partook of his hospitality, congratulated him on his blessed independence, and freedom from the miserable shackles his unfortunate brother benedicts were doomed to wear.

Early in June he sat one morning late at the breakfast-table, reading the papers and letters of the day, and lingered more leisurely over them than was his wont of late. His commanding figure was arrayed in a fashionable dressing-gown of flowered crimson, his feet in gay slippers, which rested indolently upon an ottoman. So richly was he surrounded by almost effeminate luxuries, that he rarely escaped the imputation of dandyism: however, his habits seemed to forbid the characteristic. His literary tastes were denoted in the books and periodicals which filled the shelves and table of the adjoining library, and his passion for music in the exquisitely toned instruments that showed him an amateur in the science. The delicately-perfumed handkerchief, and elegant fabrics which composed his apparel, were but the suitable adorning of the gentleman; his character was little biased by the essentials of his toilette, and the dignity of the man not lessened by the luxury that seemed his natural element.

His engagements, absorbing as they were, did not, however, exclude him from the society of the fashionable and gay, whom he frequently sought in the saloons of the wealthy and distinguished, where in the promenade and *tête-à-tête*, he bore from many younger competitors for the smiles of beauty the palm of the accomplished courtier.

While laying aside his letters as he rose to prepare for the business of the day, his eye rested upon a little envelope which he had laid aside more than a year ago. He took it from a drawer, and, with something akin to a pang, opened it. It contained a long beautiful tress of hair, now waving as soft and bright as when it lay on the brow of Flora. With a smothered feeling of mingled sorrow and grief he looked at it intently, and carefully placed it in a safer, more secluded place.

"Can I ever hope to find," he thought, "such guilelessness of heart, such loveliness of person in an accomplished woman of society as poor Flora had—one that I can adore as I did her, and yet show to the world with pride; one whose family will be honored by my children, and on whose birth no stain of humiliation rests?" These queries passed through the mind of Louis Clarendon at the age of thirty years. His attention was soon arrested by the presentation of a letter. As he took it from the servant, the handwriting for a moment puzzled him, but a perusal of its contents betrayed the writer to be a gentleman whom he had met several years before. He pondered on the note, which contained a request from Mr. Livingston, of Villacora, on the Hudson, to visit him at his cottage, at his earliest convenience, on a matter of business.

Mr. Clarendon recalled immediately to his remembrance the stately Colonel, and also recollected his little daughter who was with him at the time he met him ten years previous at Cape May. He wondered if her youth had fulfilled the promise of her childhood, but came to the conclusion that if reared in such retirement she must be as fresh as a milk-maid, and without more cultivation than a white clover from her father's field patch.

With this equivocal compliment on the charms of the young lady, Mr. Clarendon drew his white fingers through his profuse dark locks, and gave a glance at the mirror opposite him, quite satisfied with the reflection, considering that he contrasted favorably with most of his contemporaries. Young he was, whatever his years, and possessed qualities which made him, perhaps, perennial in the gay circles, where year after year he had shone a fixed star.

After passing the morning at his office, Mr. Clarendon partook of an early dinner, and proceeded to the shore of the Hudson. A short sail brought him to the landing, from which easy access was made to the cottage of Colonel Livingston. After the bustle of the city, the serenity of the country was grateful to his senses, each tree and object attracting his eye, from the shade of the quivering poplar and the tall majestic elm, to the graceful willow as it bent arching over the silvery waters, that were long in view, as he drove onward towards the dwelling he sought. He found the Colonel's cottage densely shaded, and the fragrance of the lilacs, roses, and freshly-blown mock orange, delicious as garden paths.

As he entered beneath the shade of old chestnuts, which overhung the wicker gate, he involuntarily lingered to inhale leisurely the aromatic smell of green things. The Colonel came on to the piazza to greet him, and welcomed him as an old friend. The former had altered much in ten years, and in the stern, dejected countenance of the man he now saw, he could scarcely recognize the affable, elegant Edward Livingston, whose society was once so much courted by those around him. Deferred hope since then had literally made sick the disappointed heir ; and furrows were traced where once gleamed smoothly the polish of early manhood.

"I am much indebted for your promptness," said the latter, as he extended his hand to Mr. Clarendon.

"I am gratified with the summons," replied the visitor. "Your residence is very attractive. It is some years since we have met, and I am glad to renew the acquaintance. You are associated with some very pleasant recollections."

"I remember you, sir," said the Colonel, "and rumor has since made better the acquaintance."

"Your place is really lovely, sir," said Mr. Clarendon, looking about him, as they proceeded towards the house. "Rather cold here in winter, I suppose?"

"I am accustomed to it," said the Colonel, "though our heavy snows are not so welcome to me as to my daughter. She loves them like a Laplander ; and would like a reindeer for her steed. The day is pleasant ; suppose we look about before we hold our conference."

It was a golden afternoon, and so the birds thought, if their music could bespeak their gladness. Nature was in her richest June robe ; and joyous as beauty in her prime. The flowers, the air, the sunshine, and jewelled insects, formed a halo of brilliancy. An avenue of tall trees waved their strong arms in the breeze,—affording a delicious shade to its gravelled pathway.

On one side of the cottage, a green lawn sloped to the river, while through the giant branches of the oak and elm was seen a view of the majestic Hudson—the distant peaks of the Highlands being visible, through an occasional opening.

It was approaching evening. The wild rose of summer shed its perfume on the air, and the thickets and hedges, near by, were overrunning with emerald leaves and luxuriant flowers. The snow berry with its waxen fruit hung in rich clusters on

bushes, green as the first shoots of the evergreen ; and now and then studding the foliage glittered the bright twigs of the silver tree, whose graceful leaves trembled in the summer wind. Butterflies winged in the sunshine,—the black-bird darted from the bushes, and the mellow note of the thrush came like a flute upon the air.

Colonel Livingston wandered through every rustic path with his visitor ; and gradually became inspired with the cheerfulness of his guest. The latter secretly hoped to see somewhere on the grounds the little girl whom he had frolicked with as a child ; and in every green opening where a partridge might have made egress, he looked for something small and fairy-like,—forgetting the progress of time since he had held the little Cora on his knee. He felt the influence of the charming country scene ; but the radiance of earth, the blue tints of water and sky, were all unsatisfying. Something more beautiful was essential to the landscape. But the daisy he sought bloomed nearer than he thought. Cora Livingston was unmindful of her father or his visitor ; and sat in the trellised doorway, training a pet canary bird, which rewarded her caressing attentions with low chirping, that seemed to delight her, as she turned her head towards the shoulder on which it momentarily perched. She then coaxed it upon her finger, and put its little bill to her red lips, laughing merrily at the freedom of her favorite. She was dressed in a rustic garb, with a white sun bonnet, and blue, airy dress ; yet the bird's music, which now rose clear and sweet, was unheeded,—for he had caught a view of the delicate cheek, and sunny brown ringlets, that seemed to disdain their light covering. He looked silently and intently upon the sweet, young face, while her father discoursed on agriculture,—she being wholly unconscious of a stranger's proximity or observation. It was now lighted with a smile of girlish fondness, and her lips parted with delight and triumph, as she listened to the first warble of her bird. Mr. Clarendon well remembered the little Cora, whom he had seen years since, on the sea-shore, and had thought her then a singularly beautiful child ; her face often recurred to his memory, and if he ever pictured a cherub to his fancy, it seemed to come in the guise of little Cora Livingston. He remembered, too, how he loved to tease her, to excite her childish waywardness, and the pettish airs that over indulgence gave rise to ; but ten years had nearly obliterated

the vision ; and but for her father's application, she might never have been recalled to his remembrance. But now the child had vanished ; and in her place stood an elegant, simply-attired figure, in the perfection of youthful womanhood. He knew that he now saw the same,—for the golden hues that played in the little Cora's soft curls still lingered on the brow of the maiden ; and in the deep blue of the upraised eyes, he now saw the little fairy of the beach.

Mr. Clarendon replied with courtesy to Colonel Livingston ; the growth of buckwheat and flax, losing, meanwhile, no seeming observation, though his wandering eye was roving in the direction of a sweeter blossom than Villacora had yet furnished him. After a suitable pause, the admiring guest attracted the attention of the Colonel towards the young lady, and inquired if she was his daughter. The father replied in the affirmative, and then turned the eye of his visitor to a young nursery of peach trees in the distance, which he proposed they should examine. Mr. Clarendon saw a richer peach bloom nearer by, but patiently indulged the Colonel's adoration of his young trees, and turned off into another path, casting inward anathemas upon all fruit-growers. Through the branches under which he passed, the floating figure of blue was apparent, though now it seemed wandering like himself ; and in the distance, the charm of the golden-haired vision was enhanced. But grafts, young suckers, and shoots had to be looked at and discussed ; and unweariedly were the varieties exhibited, until Mr. Clarendon had paid the penalty of his readily professed enthusiasm for such treasures of the soil. But after reddening his eyes upon a regiment of labels, and spoiling his delicate kids in fingering the bark of as many leafless saplings, his afflictions were at an end, and there now seemed a prospect of looking within. He had approached the piazza, where there seemed another chance for a sight of the bird and its mistress, but instead of blue eyes, red lips, and golden tresses, there stood within view, Mrs. Jonson, in bombazet, with a frizette and worsted work. She was still at work upon the horns of the ambiguous animal, and it seemed an everlasting task to create the resemblance intended on canvas. But Mrs. Jonson had only looked out to see who could be coming ; and of course not to be seen, much less to fill the place of the young girl who had vanished ; yet just as she encountered the searching eyes of the visitor, a peacock came upon the piazza—

like herself, uninvited—and both, after making a brief display of their expansive capabilities, somewhat fluttered at the advent of the visitors, strutted off together under full canvas.

Mr. Clarendon seemed doomed to disappointment, and fearing that business matters would soon engross the Colonel, and bent upon seeing the bird and the beauty, he suggested to the heartless parent who seemed so regardless of the latter, "that his daughter must have changed much the last ten years" A very natural supposition, though possessing little novelty to the father of his ripening charge. He assented, however, and inquired if she had not just left the piazza. The visitor having seen little but the fat woman in bombazet, and a peacock, was shocked at the Colonel's bad eyesight, and more at his absence of mind.

Still there was hope—he intended to stay to tea—so walking within doors, he seated himself in one of the fragrant parlors, which gave evidence of the abode of some fairy inhabitant. Here the Colonel continued his discussion of the growth of his fruit, which now had turned upon the merits of his strawberry crop, which led on to raspberries, and finally closed on cherries. The doors were constantly opening, but sometimes it was the dog, and sometimes the cat that slid in with an "at home" air; then the cook would put in her woolly head, on the top of which perched a turban, but the whites of her eyes disappearing, the visitor in despair turned towards another opening in the distance, but naught was there discernible, but the fat lady with a small plate of something, which might be a delicate roll of butter, or a spare wing of a chicken, which she thought would be nice for a lunch, with a pickle, towards bed-time.

Whatever it was, turn whither he would, the bombazet lady was visible, though the picture was seldom in repose.

The berries, and matters of the day, had been discussed; and the Colonel made comfortable by very respectable-looking tea-table preparations, owing to Mrs. Jonson's ingenuity and prudence in saving delicacies, which she thought could not better be produced than on the present occasion. She bustled around with great enthusiasm, being strongly impressed with the gentility of the visitor, from his general appearance. She became as impatient as Mr. Clarendon for Miss Cora's return; and looked out of every window, and every door; and crossing the piazza, finally went to the gate; and was much

relieved, as tea was waiting for the young lady, to see her coming homewards—though her progress was somewhat retarded by the engrossing company of a young gentleman, who suddenly disappeared, when she came up the avenue alone, with her sun-bonnet in her hand.

The Colonel, too, had begun to be fidgetty, and brightened as much as the rest as she gaily stepped into the parlor, while she cried out, "Papa, have I kept tea waiting?"

"My daughter," said the Colonel, "Mr. Clarendon."

"I shall hardly greet Miss Cora as a stranger," said the gentleman, rising, "though she may not remember me."

Cora was surprised, but with grace and self-possession accepted the hand of Mr. Clarendon, then quietly laying down her flowers, looked half-timidly, half-inquiringly, in the face of him who addressed her. She was somewhat taller than he had supposed her, at first sight, but her refined, aristocratic style of beauty charmed him; and the little rustic that he had pictured vanished in the graceful vision that Cora presented.

But her grace had about it the simplicity of the child,—it seemed dignity inborn, not cultivated,—as natural to her as the lily's motion, waving in the summer's wind, and rearing its proud snowy petals with queenly exaltation. The hue of her cheek slightly deepened, but her complexion was more purely white than rosy, though excitement at times made her brilliant. Ordinary incidents seldom moved her,—she was playful, and sometimes wild, but when she was stirred with deep emotion, it was betrayed little by outward agitation.

Lights came in immediately, with Mrs. Jonson for standard-bearer, who never looked more majestically than when she extended, to the utter astonishment of the Colonel, two bronzed candelabras, each branch containing four sperm candles, furnished for the occasion, which (it being a summer evening) appeared rather superfluous.

But they could not be removed without too much rustling of bombazet, and as they served to show off Cora with better effect, Mr. Clarendon did not feel unpleasantly dazzled.

"Then, you do not remember me, Miss Cora," said Mr. Clarendon, "when I picked up shells for you on the sea-beach, and you as wild as a forest fawn?"

Cora seemed momentarily puzzled, but ingenuously said—"And didn't you give me lobster horns for beads, and help

me string them? Ah! I remember you, now, Mr. Clarendon!"

"And I believe I teased you some in those days?"

"Yes, you said you liked to see me pont," replied Cora, laughing. "And then you would clip off my curls. I have not forgotten anything connected with the beach—we were so happy there."

"I see, Miss Cora, that I have much to atone for, but some fairy has restored the tresses, fortunately. Pray where is the bird you were training this afternoon? I feel quite an interest in his education."

Cora smiled with gratification, and running to a cage, took from it the little yellow ball, now rolled up, with its head under its wing, and held it to her bosom, while she murmured, "Minnie has been very happy to-day. I have half wished to be a bird myself, it has been such a glad day for the whole troop."

"Sometimes," said the gallant gentleman, "one would hardly object to transmigration. Yours seems, at least, well off."

"You would like to be an eagle, I suppose," she replied, playfully; as she seated herself at the table, while her father and his guest followed the movement.

"Not the Bald Eagle, I trust," said the gentleman; accepting his cup from one of the prettiest hands that ever turned the head of an admirer.

"I suppose the aspirations of such a bird are so lofty," replied Cora, half-blushing, "that feathers are of as little consequence to him, as a bald head to a wise man."

"You seem to be ornithological to-night," interposed the Colonel, putting his fork in the toast. "Perhaps Mr. Clarendon would prefer to be Minerva's bird, if he thinks of taking wings."

"Thank you, Colonel," said Mr. Clarendon. "I am afraid Miss Cora would hardly welcome my owlship about her haunts; so when I transmigrate, I shall certainly, out of compliment to her taste, seek an eyrie nest."

"I have sometimes thought," said the Colonel, with a wonderful relaxation of his muscles, "that I should be obliged to find one for my daughter, she is so fond of rocky battlements. She has even been so romantic as to fancy it would be beautiful to sleep out of doors, starry nights, with the night-hawks and buzzards. Don't shake your head, Cora, you know you

have been just such a simpleton. Now I have always told her, that I would take the down of the bird, if she would be content with the wing !”

“I think the eagle has turned into a goose, papa,” said Cora, laughing ; “and that you are implying that my flights are certainly lowly. My father thinks, Mr. Clarendon, that I am most absurdly romantic, because I like out-door life so well.”

“He knows, Miss Cora, that it would be much harder to fancy him with a pair of wings, than yourself, and so he is envious enough to want to clip your feathers. And as we are neither of us given much to soaring, we must be pardoned for trying to keep you on our own level.”

“Don’t forget, my daughter,” interrupted the Colonel, “that we are all material, at least to-night ; and that Mr. Clarendon might like another cup of tea. Your walk has somewhat disturbed your usual equanimity. You have certainly given me green tea instead of black.”

“A thousand pardons, sir,” said Cora, blushing more than there seemed occasion for ; but Mr. Clarendon was puzzled to know whether her cheek reddened at the blunder she had made, or at any associations with her tardy return home. Another cup of tea was given her father, and this time it was of the right color ; and Mr. Clarendon observed the lady-like grace with which she made the exchange. He could not account for it, but he thought he had never known so refreshing a meal ; but whether it was country air, his stroll about the grounds, or the presence and inspiration of his sweet young hostess, that caused his exhilaration of spirits, it was difficult to divine. It might have been the effect of the whole.

Mrs. Jonson, too, had enjoyed herself—for she had taken a seat under a tree, during the tea-drinking, and being dressed “old timey” knew no reason why she should be always in the background. And as the door of the tea-room looked upon the garden, she knew that she should come in for a frontispiece. So the “animal-culy,” as she called her worsted-figure, was likely to progress, and then, too, she was conveniently situated to know when tea was over. She now and then looked up to see how the pine-apple held out, and if there would be enough for next time, and almost wished she had ornamented the table with onions ; but on the whole, thought the repast looked respectable—especially the sperm candles.

She had now a good opportunity to see as well as to be seen, and was astonished that Miss Cora shouldn't have put on her new silk, instead of wearing a flimsy muslin, off her shoulders—she might, at least, have had on sleeves, instead of pouring tea in bare arms ; then, too, her hair was falling about her ears, instead of being put up in puff-combs. It was her private opinion, that she looked like a fright. And as Mrs. Jonson stitched on, she wondered who that young man was that came to the gate with her. It was no one she knew ; and she thought it would be well enough to keep a good lookout for strangers. How did she know but he might be a robber in disguise—or that he might be older than he looked, and took that sly way to see her, knowing that she was staying at the Colonel's. So the widow had her private thoughts, and they were a great consolation to her, considering she had but little else.

But the frontispiece was likely to be broken up, as the bell rang in the tea-room ; and it was her time to eat something, considering it was late enough, and she liked to go in before the company scattered ; perhaps, too, the lights might want snuffing, and she always liked to be in season—so at the first tinkle of the silver, Mrs. Jonson appeared, but having, in her absence of mind, forgotten to put down her worsted-work, laid it on the mantel-piece, first giving it an oblong squint through her hands. Mr. Clarendon had taken an aversion, perhaps unreasonably, to the widow, owing to her first appearance on the piazza, when he was looking for Cora ; and was now amazed at her cool impudence, and wondered that the Colonel kept such a flaunting concern about his establishment. She seemed certainly out of keeping with everything else, and the Colonel himself always felt asthmatic, he knew not why, when she was about. She disturbed everybody (for the cook and gardener hated her) but Cora, who felt sorry for her, since she had told her all about her having “lived in style, and becoming reduced, with nothing to sympathize with.”

But Mrs. Jonson knew nothing of Mr. Clarendon's opinion of her, nor of the Colonel's want of breath, so she leisurely examined the cups and saucers, and scraped the preserve plates, setting the main dish out of the cook's sight, as “niggers” she knew always “liked sweet things,” and besides such “sass” made them impudent. “The more they got the

more they wanted ;" and it gave her time to examine the visitor's watch seal at a distance, seeing she couldn't see it nearer. If she could only have had a chance, she would have hunched Cora, and told the child to "fix up," but before the opportunity came, the "company," father, and daughter had gone on the piazza, from which the Colonel drew his reluctant visitor towards his study. The conference was, however, short, and seemingly gratifying to the Colonel, who took a retired seat to smoke, leaving Mr. Clarendon with Cora. There was novelty and fascination in the looks and ways of the young girl to the fastidious connoisseur. After excusing himself to the Colonel, he suggested to Cora that a walk through the garden would be pleasant. Without embarrassment, she complied with the wish, and, in her playful acquiescence, reminded him of the child of old memory, though the mature grace that subdued her ripened charms, forbade any approach to his old familiarity with her.

But in their long walk, he won her kindest good will ; he wounded his fingers to cull through the hedge her favorite briar blossoms,—fed her bird, and praised her pink-eyed rabbits and gold-fish ; and as he approached the summer-house, gratified her whim of securing a garland of clematis blossoms, to adorn a flower-vase which she designed for a parlor ornament. He sympathized with her in her enthusiasm for all beautiful things, and beheld in her delicate aristocratic beauty, as she walked by his side, with queenly dignity, his ideal of a wife. Still to him, Cora Livingston was but a child in years, and he dared not entertain a thought of her in that relation. But the more he conversed with her, the more he was amazed at her maturity of character, and the depth, feeling, and poetry of her nature. He discovered that though like a child she could still chase a golden bee or butterfly, and wandered in wild country paths, among hedges and brambles, for flowers and berries, that she never lost sight of one great aim in her enjoyments—the attainment of some new idea, from her observation of the beautiful and curious ; and that mere excitement constituted not all the charm of her wild wanderings.

"What do you do," said he, "with all those little gems of leaves and buds you have gathered there ? as soon as they are withered, they are nothing but rubbish. Is it not better to leave them on the stem, and then come daily and look at fresh ones ?" said Mr. Clarendon.

"Ah, but a microscope will bring out such new beauties," Cora replied, "such exquisite touches and hues, as the natural eye cannot see, and the more I revel in such sweets, the more I love nature—and wonder at the Power that made them."

"I have seen wild flowers too," said Clarendon, "that would repay me for thorny labor."

"I supposed that you would only like something very rare—a night-blooming ceres, or the rare-blossoming aloe."

"Yes—the flower must be rare that pleases me—but it must be simple and fresh too. Such an one, I have first seen to-day."

Mr. Clarendon sought the expression of the blue eyes, that looked truthfully upon him, but he saw that the owner of them was unused to the language of gallantry.

"In our garden?" said she, pleased with the idea that they possessed such a treasure.

Cora's artlessness, and freedom from vanity, increased Mr. Clarendon's admiration; and he did not repeat an acknowledgment that he saw was lost upon her. He was contented with her confidence in him; and her free and playful address, so unmingled with coquetry or love of admiration. He looked at the wild sunny curls floating on the evening breeze—at the coral lips that parted, either to smile, or to close with serenity, into as sweet a bow as Cupid ever carried; at the dimples that nestled in the loveliest cheek that fair hair ever shaded, and half believed the cherub child had come again on his vision; but the intelligence that beamed in every glance, the feeling and tenderness that the sweet mouth expressed, and the rounded perfection of a form, swelling with graceful proportions, revealed the beautiful intellectual woman.

Words of gallantry were hushed on his lips—coquetry passed from his glance—the purity of Cora Livingston awed him, and made him crave a treasure, that seemed each moment as far from him as the bright evening star, that rose above his head. The evening was serenely lovely—the dew was falling gently on the flowers, that sent up their balmy perfume, and the dying crimson light in the west still tinged the bed where the sun had gloriously sunk—making such a twilight as angels might love to gaze upon.

Both wanderers were loth to return. After an hour's absence, they remembered that the Colonel was alone; and

that the call within was imperative. They had been through the garden ; and in every path where Cora fancied their visitor would like to rove, and in her choice of spots she had had a sole eye to his gratification. But Mr. Clarendon had known little of grass or shrubbery, and when he returned could not tell whether he had trodden on roses or daisies, but that he had been in clover he was fully conscious, and in the society of the loveliest girl the rays of the young moon ever silvered. He had urged her to come to New York when the autumn leaves began to fall, and assured her that humanity and vegetation was not there as she supposed, dried as shaker herbs, and gave her, as his opinion that she would soon love a promenade in Broadway better than in bruising her little feet over country roads.

"I have only recently returned from there," said she, much to his surprise ; and when he found that Cora had been (though but as a school-girl), in association with the most aristocratic of his acquaintance, and moreover was nearly connected with families of the highest rank, in the most distinguished circles of New York, she rose further in the ascendant, and rolling mists came thicker between her and himself.

The Colonel was suddenly elevated much in his estimation ; and even fat Mrs. Jonson seemed to waddle less consequentially, and Villacora to possess enhanced attractions. Mr. Clarendon was decidedly fond of style, and placed unbounded importance upon position, and what he called respectability of birth. He was, therefore, the more acquiescent to the proposal of the Colonel to have another interview, on ascertaining that the former did not carry himself so lordly without a pedestal to base upon. Mr. Clarendon soon convinced the latter that he was helpless without his aid ; and impressed him with his ability to promote his interests, while Colonel Livingston confided to him his tale of wrongs, and his hope of finally recovering his lost property. The oily tongue of the counsellor removed all fancied obstacles—difficulties vanished as he plausibly talked, and the sunshine of prosperity seemed already to gild his path, while his daughter was again the heiress of her grandfather's estate. While they conversed, the time rapidly sped away ; and at the earnest solicitation of the Colonel, Mr. Clarendon concluded to pass the night at Villacora. Cora had been in the habit of sing-

ing and playing for her father before he retired ; and though she knew that she played but indifferently, she did not regard criticism, but ever gratified him with his evening song under all circumstances. Mr. Clarendon's taste was highly cultivated, and his ear fastidiously nice ; consequently the simple melody of an uncultivated voice, without artistic skill in the accompaniment, afforded him little enjoyment. He followed Cora to the piano, to turn her music leaves, expecting a brilliant entertainment, but in this he was disappointed. Her voice was clear and sweet, and some of her tones full of pathos, but she exhibited none of the skillful touches of the master performers,—and a simple accompaniment to her song was all that she undertook.

To her father she had sung a prolonged and "sweet good night"—and rose from the instrument, with an affectionate smile for him—looking for no applause and expecting no comment.

"Do you play much ?" said Mr. Clarendon.

"Not at all," replied Cora, without affectation. "You are accustomed to playing, and I know what it is, but I content myself with the very small demand my father makes upon my powers. I gratify him, and am satisfied. If he was ambitious that I should excel, I would try to do so, but as an accomplishment, I have not sufficient inducement to practice."

"But, perhaps, may have, some day ?" said Mr. Clarendon, significantly.

"When the inducement comes, I will try," said Cora, "if it is not too late." Cora smiled so sweetly that, for the first time, Mr. Clarendon thought a woman bewitching, without the charm that the spell of music creates, and even wished that he could hear her song, "Sweet flower, good night !" repeated. Why was it ? Cora certainly did not excel as a singer. Still he felt that there was heart in all that she did—a motive which hallowed the act. For a while conversation ensued, in which Cora was mostly a listener. Mr. Clarendon was successful in any vein which he might seek ; and observing that Cora appreciated his entertaining powers, was inspired to an unusual effort. Colonel Livingston also aroused from his reserved mood, and made his daughter happy by his cheerfulness. While they were engaged in an animated discussion, the door opened, and a rotund figure appeared, dressed in white, with a well corseted bust, on the shelf of which lay a full-

blown red rose. The worsted-work was laid aside, and, the tea things being cleared away, Mrs. Jonson thought that the candles might want snuffing, or that a pitcher of water might be acceptable; and so she concluded that she would dress herself appropriately to the season, "airy-like for June," and just appear—not exactly as ghosts are supposed to do, her figure forbidding that, but bodily, and, perhaps, usefully. Mrs. Jonson was not without her thoughts, nor action either, and sometimes showed discrimination and observation beyond what was expected of her, at least the Colonel thought so. Mr. Clarendon saw the conspicuous personage approaching, and held up a newspaper to screen his face, when she entered the room with a sliding step, with her eyes fixed on nothing in particular, and inquired, in a general way, if "she could be made in any way useful?"

Colonel Livingston was decidedly mortified, and determined each day to discharge the officious, omnipresent, but well-intentioned, Mrs. Jonson, though Cora was more amused than chagrined at her frequent errands, always flattering herself that Mrs. Jonson had made "positively her last appearance."

Mrs. Jonson receiving no immediate reply, stood beneath the candelabras, and graciously smiled on the company. The Colonel, supposing that he had answered her, asked the lady in white, in no amiable tone, "What she wanted?"

"I asked, sir," said she, "if I could be made in *any way useful*?"

Mr. Clarendon being *vis-à-vis* to the lady, arose and precipitately walked towards the open door, while Cora quietly approached her, and said, "No, Mrs. Jonson, we wish for nothing. We will ring when you are wanted." The tone was gentle; so the reduced lady walked out, going by way of the piazza, which carried her past the windows and the door where Mr. Clarendon stood, endeavoring to conceal his amusement. As she passed him she said, "good evening," in a very amiable manner.

The hour for retiring came, when the Colonel remembered that he had not told Mrs. Jonson to see to the arrangement of Mr. Clarendon's apartment. It was, therefore, painfully necessary that she should be summoned, and the inquiry made of her, if she had done so. Mrs. Jonson, meanwhile, was sitting at the corner of the dining-room table, with a her-

ring and pickled mushroom, waiting for the bell. Much to her satisfaction, she was at length summoned, though Cora prudently met her in the hall, and asked her if the gentleman's room was in readiness?"

"Oh, yes," she replied. "I fixed it before tea; and was just going to ask him up—but this warm weather oppresses me."

"You needn't speak to the gentleman, Mrs. Jonson," said Cora, smiling at the circumference to which the housekeeper had reduced her waist. "Only give me a light."

"His room is lit, Miss; and I'll attend to him to the tip of a rose-bud," said the lady, swallowing the last mushroom.

The air and manner of Mrs. Jonson, as she said this, amused Cora; and she laughed, much against her inclination, audibly to the ears of the gentlemen.

"I wonder what amuses Cora," said the Colonel.

Cora endeavored to take the candlestick from the hand of Mrs. Jonson; but the latter so smilingly opposed, that she was compelled to follow her into the parlor, to which she advanced, with a courteous nod of her head, to the guest, saying, "I am ready, sir."

"Shall I take your light, madam?" Mr. Clarendon questioned.

"I'll see you up. Shall I go ahead?"

Cora knew that Mrs. Jonson was unmanageable; and told Mr. Clarendon that the latter would show him to his room.

He therefore bade her and the Colonel good-night, and followed the white robes up stairs; and as the form they encased was of good size, Mr. Clarendon was pleased to see that her feet and ankles were fully able to support their burden.

When she opened the door of the chamber, she stretched it to its full width; and after wishing its occupant "pleasant dreams," laid her full-blown rose on the candlestick, and inquired "if she could do anything further."

Mr. Clarendon closed the door with heartfelt congratulation, and looked about his chamber. It was evident that Mrs. Jonson had, indeed, attended to his wants to the "tip of a rose-bud;" for on his toilet-table stood a small plate, on which lay a cold boiled egg and a sprig of peppergrass, while on the opposite end was a bouquet tied with a green ribbon. The curtains were looped up each with a hollyhock, and roses lay scattered on his pillow.

Like Cora, he could not suppress a laugh, though vexed with anything that seemed ridiculous in the home of the exquisite girl who had so fascinated him.

After their guest had retired, Colonel Livingston asked Cora to remain a few moments while he talked to her about Mrs. Jonson.

"My child," said he, "I am much disappointed in our housekeeper. She is excessively disagreeable—airs in domestics are intolerable. Why really, her appearance to-night was highly improper; and her assurance quite unbecoming. Can't you reform her, my dear? She is conspicuous—quite so, in white—and wears roses! Something must be done—she has mortified me. I thought of a stage actress, with foot-lights, only they were above her head when she came in. We can't keep her, Cora."

"Oh! papa," said Cora, laughing, "it is so droll to see her so fond of eating, and yet so sentimental and fat. But she keeps things in order; and her greatest weakness is her vanity and love of dress. I don't myself like upper servants, papa, they don't know their places. But what can we do, and not offend her? Shall I talk to her?"

"Yes, yes, talk to her—tell her to keep out of sight until she is wanted. How do you like Mr. Clarendon, Cora?"

"Oh, very much, he is very agreeable—excuse me, and I will see what Mrs. Jonson is going to order for breakfast. Good-night, dear papa."

The Colonel kissed his daughter affectionately, and retired.

"Come here," winked and beckoned the now unlaced upper servant, who appeared with her head in the doorway, as she saw the Colonel depart. "Miss Cora, I have got something to tell you. I found an egg and boiled it for him, and a taste of pepper-grass, to sleep on; I put a genteel smell in his room out of roses. Wasn't that doing it up like a cowslip, my little lady?"

"What have you done, Mrs. Jonson? Oh! how could you? What will he think of us?" Then, in spite of her vexation, Cora laughed, till she cried.

"When you are older, Miss Cora," said Mrs. Jonson, "you'll know better how to put on the rose-tip, with your visitors. Why if I hadn't been here, there wouldn't have been any show at all."

"But, Mrs. Jonson, papa doesn't like such show—he likes things done quietly and elegantly. You entirely overdo matters, Mrs. Jonson, papa thinks. And that it is best for you not to come in the parlor so much, we both agree, Mrs. Jonson. You know the bell will ring when you are wanted, and, another thing, he does not like to have you dress so much."

"Well, I should like to know, Miss, if he wouldn't put my nose the other side of my head?—and turn my soul and body inside out? Make a Sister of Charity out of me? I think I should smile to see myself in that condition. Why, I can tell you, if it hadn't a-been for the way you said them unhandsome things of me, I'd have quit to night."

"But you know, Mrs. Jonson, we are not accustomed to such ways. The bell will always summon you."

"But do you suppose I am going to be tied to a bell-rope?"

"You know that is a part of your occupation," said Cora, sweetly.

"Hang the occupation, then—I'll quit before I'll harbor with niggers."

"That is not required of you. The best way is to keep more retired—and then you will please better," said Cora.

"Well, well, don't talk any more. I guess I shall be as glad to be clear of the parlors as they is of me. The key is in the closet if you want a bite. I'm going to bed; heighho—Oh! Susannah!"

Mrs. Jonson sung herself out of the room, when Cora retired.

The morning was clear and beautiful, and Mr. Clarendon arose at early dawn, to enjoy it. He had slept well, and was in fine spirits. On throwing open the lattice, that presented a view of the garden, he was surprised to see Cora already out, and in conversation with the gardener. She had a tiny, lame chicken in her hands; and was apparently consulting him on his skill in surgery. The old man seemed amused with her solicitude, but held the broken leg of the wee chick, while Cora tied it up; and then buried it in cotton in a basket. He watched her varying expression—her downcast,

pitying look, as she cooed over her downy pet ; and at her smile of satisfaction, as she placed it in its warm nest ; and thought it little short of desecration, for her so to waste her sympathy. He had never before thought he could envy a lame chicken.

After the finishing touch to his toilet, he proceeded below ; and was soon at her side, rallying her on her employment. Cora's cheek brightened a little, as he accosted her, when she artlessly dilated on the accident, which she declared was all owing to an ugly gobbler-turkey that ran over it—upon which, of course, Mr. Clarendon bestowed his wrath and disapprobation. The chicken being disposed of, Cora led Mr. Clarendon to the stable, to see her pretty riding horse. He was amused with her fond familiarity with the graceful animal, that laid down his head caressingly, as Cora smoothed his glossy mane, and silken neck ; and was not satisfied until she consented to mount, and take a ride with him before breakfast.

Arrangements were accordingly made with the groom ; and her father's horse, and her own, saddled, while Cora arrayed herself pleasantly for the exercise. As she was seldom thwarted, she thought of little else than the beautiful morning, and the gambols of her pretty Robin. Her father was yet too sleepy to demur ; and was little conscious of anything, but a dreaming idea of a beaver hat, floating veil, and a riding whip, which together passed through his room. The next moment, he was dozing, while his guest, whom he had sent for on business, was cantering off beside his daughter—she as lovely a typification of a summer morning, as Aurora herself. Coquettishly arrayed, and gracefully mounted, she reined in her favorite ; and so fully enraptured the eye of her companion, that he had entirely forgiven the shock she had given his fastidious taste, by mending the chicken's leg. She was so entirely at home on the back of Robin, that he found his care of her quite unnecessary ; and could have excused even some affectation of timidity ; but Cora was so entirely natural that his solicitude was lost upon her.

She was now gay and playful as a child—would sometimes ride by his side, and then canter gaily away from him—with an arch smile, that challenged pursuit ; and at times appeared so reckless that his fears were much excited. But after seriously urging her to keep a slower gait, she courteously

complied, though he saw that her exercise was her chief amusement. A rain had recently fallen, and the woods were green and beautiful. The birds sang merrily in a wild chorus, and flitted in the branches so near them, that Cora often playfully bounded forward, for a nearer view of some crimson or yellow-breasted warbler. Every flowering tree she passed she robbed of blossoms, to decorate the neck of her pony, and gem her waist with brilliant buds and bright-hued petals. The morning mists yet hung on the brows of distant hills, veiling them in pearly clouds, while nearer by, the landscape was gilded with the morning sun.

Cora's spirits became gently subdued by the serenity and loveliness of nature—giving Mr. Clarendon a better opportunity to come within the sphere of her fascinating influence. He could now nearer watch the sweet blue of her soft-fringed eyes; and in their melting depths try to read some sympathy in his growing admiration—but it was an effort useless as the devotion he yielded. Her curls were used to float on every passing breeze; and she thought they needed no more skillful arrangement by the hand that gently put them aside; her tiny foot she felt securely stirruped; and marvelled at the vigilance of him who would better replace it, and for the first time was offered a guide to the rein, which she had felt competent to manage herself. Still, these were trifles of brief annoyance, and she richly enjoyed her ride, independent of her companion, whom she hoped had had equal pleasure. But the happiness of the latter had been of an equivocal nature. He had found Cora insensible to his flattery or devotion, who had apparently no appreciation of the gallantry hitherto considered magical among his female acquaintances. He was piqued and chagrined with her indifference. Still she was ready to converse on any topic he might choose; and even playfully rallied him on his silence, which she laughingly told him was all owing to rising so early. That she had observed his mood at all, flattered him; his spirits rose under the impression; and with gay sallies and animated conversation, he redeemed himself from her accusation. He rallied her in return, on her love for the country; and in a vein of irony descanted on its charms, in contrast with city life. He wondered why she ever slept *at all* where nature was so rife with music—that she lost the sweetest songs of the bull-frogs; and that the owls hooted in vain during her slumber; that she missed entirely the night-hawks

and buzzards ; and that while she was dreaming, the fairies were holding their revels, with Queen Titania at their head, and calling for her to join their band. That she lost all the night-fogs, which were so useful to the complexion ; and the melody of a thousand insects that never showed their wings by daylight.

And more than this, that the flowers opened while she was sleeping ; and that the bees stole all the honey, that were she up it would be her privilege to sip. "What was sleep," he said, "in comparision with all this?—that if he lived in the country, he should become so romantic and enchanted that he should think it positively wicked to lose the sight of the smallest gnat, or the odor of a chickweed—that he had already pressed some grasshoppers, and stuck a hornbug and dragon fly, for his cabinet of curiosities. But he had acquired the habit of sleeping in the city—for what was there *there* to wake for ? Nothing but the music of human voices—the excitement of the world's stage, 'where all the men were players.'—'A fleeting show, for man's illusion given.'"

So Mr. Clarendon ridiculed Cora, for her enthusiasm for country-life and all verdant things, though he begged her for "just one flower from her waist to carry home with him—that such a treasure would compensate for all the loss of sleep that country life ever occasioned him."

But Cora protested that he could not appreciate the gift—but that "if she ever found a beautiful artificial rose, she would send it to him ; something truly Parisian."

"But supposing I was to cull the prettiest wild flower the country contained—more beautiful than the city could furnish—would you sanction me in my efforts to transplant it?"

The hand of Mr. Clarendon slid from the bridle-rein he held, on to the little gloved one near him, as he spoke.

"Oh, no," said Cora. "It would never flourish, it would die for want of sympathy in the city—poor little flower ! I should pity it," she continued, gaily, while she urged her companion to ride faster, as it was almost breakfast time.

Mr. Clarendon was reluctant to return. Here Cora had no pets to attract her attention from himself ; and as he had finally drawn hers from Robin, he thought he might claim it now more exclusively. But Cora had thought of her father, and was bound heart and steed homeward, so that he was forced to acquiesce in her movements. She had become sud-

denly alarmed about Mrs. Jonson, as she had parted with her the evening before, under rather critical circumstances. She felt mortified about the entertainment furnished Mr. Clarendon in his chamber, but could not have the courage to allude to it; and, lest anything ridiculous should again occur, she felt that she ought to be at home, if possible, to prevent it.

As Cora feared, Mrs. Jonson was indignant with the disapprobation of the Colonel, and determined to let him see "how things would work without her." So she concluded not to "be around the parlors so much;" consequently, when Cora returned, the usual work was not done; and the same state of things prevailed, as was left the night previous. Ends of cigars lay in improper places, rose leaves were scattered about the rooms, and such a general disorder prevailed, as never was before seen in the cottage. Not a broom had found its way, where all before had been exquisite neatness; and on the unswept rug lay the cat and dog, taking their morning nap.

As Cora entered the room with Mr. Clarendon, where it was their custom, after rising, first to resort, holding her skirt up with one hand, and riding-whip in the other, her eyes radiant with beauty, a deep blush of mortification overspread her face. She had never before seen such disorder in her father's house. Mr. Clarendon observed the change in her countenance; and taking her hand said, as he regarded it.

"What is the matter?"

"I am forced to apologize," she replied. "Will you walk into the library? Our housekeeper has neglected her work, and you see here the consequences of some reproof I gave her last night, from papa."

"Regard it not, on my account, Miss Cora," replied Mr. Clarendon, "I will help you pick up the rose leaves, and as I owe the good lady some, for her generosity to me, I am bound to restore them."

"Oh! Mr. Clarendon," said Cora, her face crimsoning, "I am so mortified! You will think——: But it can't be helped; I have no time to cry about it. Pray make yourself comfortable somewhere until I can remedy matters."

"Pray what can you do? I will go into the library or garden if you say so,—but I must beg you to go with me."

"But you must excuse me, Mr. Clarendon," said Cora.

"But I cannot at all," said the gentleman.

"Then I must commence sweeping you away," said she, laughing in her vexation.

"You would make a poor hand at sweeping, I think, and don't seem exactly dressed for the occupation," replied the amused guest.

"Oh! I know it. If papa was to come down, he would be angry, and I can only do my best to restore matters." Cora hastily rang the bell, but it was not the cook's business to attend to it, and lately Mrs. Jonson had become housekeeper and waiter, so it remained unanswered. "Then I must go myself," said Cora, rising energetically.

Cora had never swept a room in her life, and when she came back in her white morning dress, broom in hand, Mr. Clarendon was still, provokingly, in the parlor.

Her bright ringlets were dancing about her glowing face, now looking perplexed and dismayed, for she knew that her father was punctilious and ceremonious, and would be excessively mortified at such an *exposé* of domestic disquietude in his house. She knew also that his pride would receive a blow that he could not well recover from, to find her sweeping and dusting with the knowledge of his fashionable guest. So she leaned imploringly on her broomstick, and looked at Mr. Clarendon. "Then you won't go?" said she, as she gave one slide towards him with the broom, while she heaved a comical sigh.

"If you will let me see how you can sweep, I will."

"Well, then, I'll not wait for you," said Cora, with a smile that he did not like to run away from. So with more activity than skill she managed to *raise* at least the dust, which Mr. Clarendon declared was "the best gymnastic exercise that he ever saw a lady perform, but hoped that it would not last long, and supposed that he was bound in honor to leave."

Cora, once left alone, soon arranged matters with neatness and taste, and was finally quite proud of her first active, domestic employment, though it had occurred under very awkward circumstances, and having taken a long ride, she had much rather have rested.

She felt her indignation rise against Mrs. Jonson, and hoped that she would that day be discharged. She had been so busy sweeping, that she had forgotten that the breakfast duties must have been neglected—that the cook always depended upon Mrs. Jonson's orders; and if the lady was consistently mad, that she had determined to be revenged in the most thorough

manner. So hurrying from the parlor to the kitchen, she found everything neglected, and the cook waiting for the housekeeper. By this time the Colonel had come down stairs, just as Cora had finished sweeping; and found her broom in hand retreating towards the kitchen. He was amazed, but remembering that he had company to entertain, resorted to his library, where he found Mr. Clarendon perusing a book.

After the morning salutations, he rubbed his hands; and looking at his watch, observed that breakfast was late, but presumed that it had waited for him. He then rung the bell violently, which music Mrs. Jonson enjoyed in her own room, stretched out upon a bed in a white morning gown, reading the "Sorrows of Werter," upside down.

"Our bell must be out of order," said the Colonel, apologetically, while he gave it another pull. "It's broken," said he, in a decided tone.

Cora heard the bells, and they came upon her ears, like the knell of all domestic peace, for she knew the disturbance such failure in regularity would cause her very precise parent. But she was stirring an omelette, for the first time; and with redder cheeks and lips, than she had ever exhibited, she continued to beat, while her excited parent continued to ring. "Do, Sophy, go to papa," said she, "leave that steak, and tell him that breakfast will soon be ready." Poor Cora was now very tired, and more ready to cry, than to eat—but from the omelette she went to the cupboard, and attempted to cut the bread, but cut her fingers with the first slice, and being obliged to give it up, was now in despair. Sophy had gone to her father—the steak was burning, and the coffee boiling over on the hearth. Her finger was bleeding, and her head aching with excitement and solicitude.

"I will not be such a simpleton," said she to herself. "It is all pride, and I will never become the victim that it has ever made of poor papa. It is for him, now, that I am suffering—not for myself. I would rather tell Mr. Clarendon the whole, than try to effect impossibilities, for appearances, and to get a good breakfast requires at least time."

But Sophy had returned, and was about expatiating on the cross looks of the Colonel when she saw Cora's dilemma.

"Now Missy just go in de parlor, I get de breakfast myself," said the ebony.

"But, Sophy, papa is in haste, and I want to help you—just tie this finger up, and I will set the table."

Sophy tied up the finger that would continue to bleed; but Cora contrived to wind her handkerchief over it, and with her left hand to arrange the breakfast table. This she accomplished very neatly and elegantly, only upsetting the saltcellar, and placing her father's napkin-ring at another plate. The breakfast was now finally ready. Sophy being always slow, and accustomed to efficient help, had scolded a good deal; and like her master, had so much family pride, that she liked to have no failure in the arrangements for the morning meal—she was therefore "put out," about the burnt steak, and could she have dragged out Mrs. Jonson from her *retiracy*, would have been at least demonstrative with her tongue, if she had spared the pudding-stick over her shoulders; and Cora had made up her mind that she would never be again so dependent upon the caprices of any domestic. But while the commotion was going on in the kitchen; and the lady housekeeper had fallen asleep over her "Sorrows," the gentlemen were yawning in the library; one thinking that he ought to be in town and the other that all "genteel housekeepers" ought to be sent to State prison.

But, at the hour of ten, Cora appeared with her bound-up hand and flushed cheeks, at the door of the library, and said,

"I believe breakfast is at *last* ready, papa."

"Ah, my daughter—you are up then?—Mrs. Jonson is ill, I hear. Sad thing! quite awkward for you! Come Mr. Clarendon, take an unceremonious meal with us this morning."

Mr. Clarendon looked at Cora solicitously—he had imagined all—but was puzzled about the bound-up hand.

"Did you lame your hand riding, Miss Cora?" said the latter.

"No," said Cora, ingenuously, in defiance of her father's notions of propriety, "I was trying to cut some bread, and cut my hand instead."

Mr. Clarendon expressed in looks his compassion, and the Colonel exhibited his anger, by a desperate plunge upon the butter. But the pride of the latter led him to conceal his chagrin as much as possible, and the Colonel never was more loquacious. Cora's extreme weariness was evident, and as the

flush faded from her cheek, she became purely white, and her eyes languid. Mr. Clarendon was compelled soon to rise from the table, and was never more in love than when he saw that delicate and beautiful as Cora seemed, she was totally free from affectation, and could meet an exigency with energy and openness.

With many flattering remarks upon the pleasure of his visit, the guest took leave of Villacora, the Colonel, and his daughter, with a promise soon to repeat his visit; but as he went into the hall, followed by the Colonel, he had the pleasure of being accosted by a familiar "good morning" from Mrs. Jonson, who had just come down stairs the front way, as large as life, dressed in white, with her slippers on—the figure-head being completed zoologically, she having sat up late at night to make them, having manufactured the soles out of one of the Colonel's old hats. Her figure was allowed its free play, as she flowingly descended with an open skirt. Over her frizette, lay a square of net-work, pinned with two gilt bugs. Colonel Livingston saw her coming, as she appeared around the point of the upper stairway. He wiped the sudden perspiration from his forehead, and very nimbly attempted to find Mr. Clarendon's hat—hoping to succeed before she presented herself, but his effort was unavailing. She passed the Colonel magnificently, and was evidently bound for the garden, but, owing to her night's task, was somewhat overpowered. The Colonel had always been rather in awe of her; and now looked solicitous as to her movements; but as she remained standing, and was likely to do so while Mr. Clarendon stayed, the gentleman hastened off, with a wave of his hand to Cora, who had sunk upon the sofa, exhausted.

The Colonel returned to the breakfast-room, where Mrs. Jonson followed, and seated herself in the rocking-chair, observing that "breakfast was late." Cora made no reply, but looked at her father, who sat bolt up in his chair—his gold-headed cane between his legs.

"Captain Liveston," said Mrs. Jonson, "I'm about journeying—but think I'll stay with you till dinner's over; I suppose you don't want parlor company any longer—I'm ready to settle, when you is."

"Any time, Mrs. Jonson—any time—call when you come back, Mrs. Jonson—inconvenient to go to the bank to-day."

An expression of womanly pride saddened the pale face of Cora, who rose and went to her chamber.

The sum due Mrs. Jonson she supposed to be about twenty dollars. She looked at her purse—it contained half the amount—then over her jewelry, and her wardrobe; wondering in what way she could procure the remainder. She could not attempt to sell anything, though she felt that she would gladly do it, rather than that Mrs. Jonson should go away unpaid.

Cora had been promised a birthday present, and such gifts were always procured by her father punctually; but she had observed that the servants' wages always troubled him. She knew nothing of his circumstances, and was mortified at his remissness. She determined that, by some personal sacrifice, this sum should be obtained for Mrs. Jonson, while she was allowed immediately to depart.

While thus meditating, her father entered her room. "Cora," said he, "I can't pay this woman to-day; talk to her, and tell her I will send it to her. I will give her a note; anything to keep her quiet."

"How much do you owe her, papa," said Cora.

"Oh, a trifle, my daughter; let her wait, only not here—she takes my breath, positively, Cora."

Cora slipped out of the room, and accosted Mrs. Jonson, who was still fanning herself in the rocking-chair.

"Well," said she; "the bells rung a chime this morning, didn't they? I was busy reading, or I might have waited on 'em, only I knew I should have to come into the parlor. How did Sophy wag, when she found she had to stir her snail horns, eh? Miss Cora. The parlors didn't need cleaning, I 'spose. I'm glad you dispensed without me so well. But you and I, Miss Cora, won't fall out. I should as soon chafe at a white kitten; besides we've had now and then a pickle together. But between you and I, and the post, I never could abide Captain Liveston. If he goes to Heaven it will be on a lightning-rod, straight up. He's too stiff for my quality."

"Don't speak in that way of papa to me," said Cora; "I have come to talk to you about your wages. He owes you twenty dollars, I find."

"Miss Cora, I always took a fancy to that gold cross of yours. Now, I'll buy it of you in the way of wages, if you'll sell it. How much is it worth?"

"About fifteen dollars," said Cora.

"I'll give you ten for it. If I should ever change my condition, I might like it for a bosom ornament."

"Well, then, Mrs. Jonson, here is ten dollars, and you may have the cross. I will get it for you."

Cora ran to her chamber, and placed the bill and the cross in the hands of the housekeeper ; and was about leaving her, when she said :

"Miss Cora, I will make my adoos to you now, as I am going to pack, and wish that you would give my farewells also to Captain Livestone and Sophy. I should like to be carried to meet a 'bus about one o'clock."

"The wagon will be ready," said Cora, with quiet dignity. Cora then went into her father's room, where he sat in gloomy thought.

"Mrs. Jonson is going, papa, and I have paid her."

"You, my daughter, how?"

"Oh, don't ask me, papa, she is satisfied."

Cora then flew out towards the stable, to order the vehicle to be made ready to convey Mrs. Jonson to the boat. Her morning had been truly a fatiguing one, and she was glad to return to her chamber ; where she soon forgot her troubles in a sound sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

"Change is written on the tide,
On the forest's leafy pride,
On the streamlet glancing bright,
On the jewelled crown of night."

MR. CLARENDON returned home, amused and charmed with his visit at Villacora. He had made satisfactory his interview with the Colonel. He had encouraged him respecting his future prospects, and given him some faint hopes of assistance in procuring an office that would yield him a comfortable income. He had found the daughter of the Colonel a fascinating girl for her years, and possessing every qualifica-

tion he could desire in a wife, with the exception of her extreme youth, and inexperience. Still he had discovered in her that inborn elegance, that promised to perfect her as a woman of society; and sufficient maturity of character to render her even now a companion. Her freshness and *naïveté* captivated him; and her beauty excited his admiration—but more than all, he looked upon her as well born and highly bred, with unexceptionable parentage and connections. That she bewitched him, or ever would, as had Flora, his heart could not acknowledge; yet when he contrasted her with the latter, the spell in which Flora had bound him, resumed its magical power. Still pride came between him and the object of his passionate love, and he reasoned himself into the belief that one so perfect as Cora Livingston, would, as his wife, exercise over him the same influence. Her youth he finally looked upon as an advantage—he felt that he could mould her the more readily to his tastes; and acquire over her that power that he could not exercise over one older. In his cooler moments, when reason and judgment held their sway, for weeks after their first acquaintance with Cora, he was biased in his preference for her as a wife, over any being that he had ever met—but there was no one so exalted in his mind, that could as yet melt and subdue his proud nature as the beautiful affectionate girl that he spurned as the sharer of his name and his home—the acknowledged idol of his heart.

Thus the conflict went on, until the loneliness of his house, his yearning for companionship, and the necessity he felt for a head to his household, induced him again to seek Villacora, and to ascertain more fully from observation, the ground on which he proposed to tread. That Colonel Livingston would feel honored by his preference for his daughter, he had little doubt, and that he could win the youthful Cora, he imagined an easy task. Secluded as she was from society, without wealth to enable her to shine in the fashionable world, he felt that ambition alone would lead her to accept his proposals, should he offer her his hand.

But the self-love of Louis Clarendon, could not be contented with the passive acceptance of his homage and name. The woman he married must purely, passionately love him for himself. So he now felt, and when he again determined to revisit the abode of Cora Livingston, it was with hope and confidence,

that should his opinion of her be confirmed, he could thus win her, wholly and speedily.

But other thoughts had engaged the present object of his fancy. She had trials to endure that he thought not of, and those that oppressed her young heart with hitherto unknown cares and anxieties.

She had been much relieved by the departure of Mrs. Jonson, but the responsibilities which it brought upon her were suddenly great and wearisome. Her father was desirous that some effort should be made to procure a substitute. He told Cora that his prospects were brightening; and that she must not allow herself any deprivation, or assume any new degrading duties. But Cora, young as she was, had had the distant mirage of anticipated fortune so long in view—bringing to the soul of her desponding parent no refreshing food for mind or body—and knew that for some unexplained reasons, bills were constantly presented to remain unpaid, and that servants (save those old faithful hearts that love and family pride yet retained) after months of labor were obliged to quit her father's service, with promises only for their reward. Her good sense showed her, that this was all wrong; and yet she had been reared in a manner to unfit her for exertion. She mourned over her helplessness, and seeming inability to aid their domestic troubles, but she knew that she could at least try to diminish their household expenses, and by assuming new cares, relieve themselves from that very uncertain comfort, a new housekeeper.

A few days after the departure of Mrs. Jonson, Cora went to her father's study—her dark blue eyes beaming with sympathy, and her cheek varying with exciting emotions.

Her little white hands and arms were laid caressingly on his shoulders, while she whispered, "don't write that advertisement, papa—I will be your housekeeper; I can have a little girl to help me, and we will get along nicely."

"Oh! no, Cora. I cannot consent to any such thing."

"Dear papa—Sophy will like it a great deal better, and do twice as much as when ordered about by a strange woman. Was not your dinner good to-day—and everything in nice order?"

"Yes, yes; but you looked wearied, and ate nothing. We have never been accustomed to such things in our family."

You look like work, Cora, truly, with your white soft fingers ! a Livingston to come to this ! I cannot permit it."

"But, papa, we can lessen our expenses until your circumstances are better. Can't you suffer any reduction in our style of living ? You must, I know, have your wine, papa ; but there are some luxuries we can dispense with."

"But I cannot see you work, Cora."

"You shall not see me work, papa. I will do all that is necessary before breakfast, instead of riding ; and then, you know, we can go at evening. Won't this do ?" she said, coaxingly.

"Well, have your own way," said the Colonel, with a sigh, as he tore up a slip of paper upon which he had written.

"But you know you cut your fingers when you attempted to work last week," he continued.

"But that was all owing to the excitement and hurry of the occasion, and pride, papa, that our poverty in servants should be concealed. Now I will not let pride cut either my fingers or my heart ; I will not be ashamed of trying to save you expense. It will not mortify me half as much to work as to have servants wait for their wages."

"Go, go, child ; but don't fatigue yourself, don't spoil your hands and complexion."

"Sophy will not let me cook, papa ; she is not afraid, you know of hers ; and I shall only take care of the parlors and the dining-room. We can have a little girl for waiter, and then we shall not be annoyed by airs or duns." So Cora closed the conference with her father ; and, by a few words, managed to procure his consent to a change which he once thought could not have been effected.

With a lighter heart, Cora now commenced a routine of daily employment, which, at first, seemed new and pleasant, from the novelty and importance which she attached to it. But there were times when she would have preferred riding, to arranging the parlors and taking care of the china and silver ; and when at times interested in a book, she heaved a sigh when she remembered that the dessert was not prepared, or the decanters re-filled with wine, a luxury to which her father had always been accustomed at dinner. And more than once she felt the burden of her cares when she longed for her favorite ramble in the woods, which seemed to have become,

of late, doubly attractive to her. But she ever cleared away the coming frown, and warbled as sweetly over her work as she had ever done when idling away her leisure hours.

Her father at first anxiously watched her movements; but was cheered when he heard the same glad tones of his daughter's voice, and saw that her sunny smile was as bright as of old. He knew not of the new vexations that she hid from his view, and of the petty annoyances that came with her new cares, many of which arose from the scanty provision made, while a generous table was essential to his good humor and comfort. Still the time came for her to ride on dear Robin, and her loved rambles were enjoyed, if she had not her choice of hours; and her father's cherished interview with her at evening, when she sang and played to him, was still one of her chief sources of happiness.

When Mr. Clarendon came again to Villacora, he met Cora going into the garden to pick strawberries for tea. She had a dish in her hand, and the same little rustic bonnet on her head which she wore when he first saw her. He accosted her suddenly; but Cora met him with sweet self-possession, laying down her dish as quietly as if it had been a bouquet of flowers, while she presented her hand and gave him a welcome. She was looking more blooming than when he last saw her, but still refined and delicate. Her dress was simple and lovely, of white material, with a black silk apron, into which was tucked a bunch of violets. Her curls were looped back, showing more perfectly her profile, which, in the unconscious way she averted her face, revealed it in its full beauty.

Mr. Clarendon held in his hand a bunch of exotics which he had procured from a green-house for Cora, and which he now handed her with his usual grace. She pronounced them beautiful, and in her enthusiasm over the rare flowers, forgot her errand into the garden. She went into the parlor with their visitor, and, after throwing aside her bonnet, placed her roses and other beauties in a vase, and said so many graceful, charming things in her admiration of them, that her guest was half jealous of his own gift. The bouquet being arranged, she invited Mr. Clarendon to a cool seat by the lattice, while she acquainted her father with his arrival. But the latter begged her not to be in haste, and to tell him where she was going when he came in.

"To pick strawberries for tea," said she.

"Enough for the bird, Minnie, I suppose," said Mr. Clarendon laughing.

"Oh! more than that, I hope," said Cora, smiling—"our vines are very full, and they are easily culled."

"But you must find it fatiguing—I can hardly excuse you, Miss Cora, until after tea, when I will accompany you, and help you rob the vines."

"Oh! I do not mean to be so rude as to go at present," said Cora with a blush, "until papa comes, but I must call him."

"Ring then, I beg of you—I have some beautiful music to show you—something quite new."

"Ah! said Cora politely—you are very kind." Mr. Clarendon unrolled several pages, over which he looked with Cora, who could not immediately release herself, though she feared she should have hardly time to pick the berries. But she lingered until she felt the necessity of going on her errand, her "little girl" being engaged with tea preparations.

"Papa will be anxious to see you, Mr. Clarendon," said she, approaching the door, and before he could object, she had summoned her father to the parlor, where she accompanied him, and excused herself, "hoping that he would remain until morning."

The Colonel was rejoiced to see Mr. Clarendon, which satisfaction he evinced by unusual relaxation from his habitual unsocial mood, and not having met him for several weeks, he was overburdened with subjects from which he had since that period been laboring for relief.

His guest, after giving the Colonel as much attention as, in his discretionary view of things, he deemed proper and agreeable, contrived to disappear from his presence. He soon found Cora in the strawberry bed—her dish quite heaped with delicious fruit. He marvelled at her success, and more at her industry, but as she had not become too ruddy by her employment, he thought her occupation rather graceful than otherwise, especially as she had finished, and might be ready to rove with him.

"Allow me to take your dish," said he, "and after I have disposed of it, we will look up the cherry trees you promised to show me when I came again."

Cora was now standing beside him, with a pair of lips as red as her strawberries, which parted in a smile of approval at his

suggestion—though she told him that she must carry them in herself, to be prepared for tea.

"Why one would think," said he, laughing, "by your supervision, that you were housekeeper."

"Well, I am," answered Cora, shaking back one of her disengaged ringlets, "and am afraid you will be the sufferer to-night by the loss of Mrs. Jonson—in your evening repast, and chamber decorations."

Mr. Clarendon laughed heartily at his remembrance of the benevolent lady, but with a sudden tone of surprise inquired, if she "really could assume any responsibility?"

"Oh, I can sweep now, and cut bread, and not cut my fingers," said she, with a musical laugh.

"With these little fingers?" said Mr. Clarendon, taking hold of the rosy tips that were yet stained with the berries.

"Oh, I find that fingers are useful for a great many purposes," replied Cora, withdrawing hers from the hand that seemed inclined to detain them. "I will be back in one moment;" but as she was about hastening towards the cottage with her fruit, a little girl accosted her, with a Holland apron and tidy dress, and after a few whispered words, she consigned the dish to the child, and started for the cherry-trees. "You must reach the branches, and I will pick," said she, "my hands are now just fitted for the task."

Cora fitted before him as she spoke, looking, as Mr. Clarendon thought, sweeter and fresher than all the honey-hearts in the orchard. Overtaking her, he asked what she would put them in. "Oh, we must tie them in bunches," said she. Mr. Clarendon assented, and with avidity entered into all her plans. For a while, he was the true Arcadian, and discussed with animation all rural and grassy things, affecting any degree of enthusiasm politic, and seemed ready to take up his abode in an apple-tree, if it suited the young beauty's romance.

As he stood confronting her, their hands mixed up with cherry leaves, and well-picked branches, he became suddenly craving for a country seat on the Hudson, and its imagined charms were so vividly described, that Cora began to believe that their town visitor was really becoming rational in his love for the country; but when she looked at the delicate hands which held her cherry-branch, and the suit of black that made up the outward adorning of the would-be-country-

gentleman, she thought he could illy stand transplanting ; and that however deep he might be rooted in country soil, he would come up a city man. "Now my hands are full," said Cora, "have you a string to tie them with—I have nothing but this about my violets."

"Let me see !" answered Mr. Clarendon ; "I brought some papers to your father, and the string, I believe, has got into my pocket ; here it is"—when out came enough red tape to confine the cherries, which Cora thought rather clumsy ; however, she accepted the offering, and thus it took a long time to arrange matters under the cherry-trees.

"After tea," said Mr. Clarendon, while he trimmed with his penknife the strings around Cora's branches, "I should like to take a drive with you. It will be pleasant about sunset. Will you give me the pleasure ?"

"Thank you," said Cora, "I have had such a long ramble this afternoon, all over the glen, that I am quite wearied—I was so glad that I went to-day, I saved the lives of some dear little robins that had built their nests there."

"Who was so cruel as to peril their lives ?"

"Oh, a gentleman—I cannot tell you his name—he was thoughtless, not cruel," said Cora, quickly.

"Do you often ramble alone, Miss Cora ? How did you prevent his shooting them ?"

"He was sorry that he had alarmed me," said Cora, with a sudden blush.

"How did you know that ?" asked Mr. Clarendon, becoming interested.

"Oh ! I know he was." Cora now played with the violets in her waist-ribbon, and her look was downcast.

"I will get that beautiful bunch of 'black hearts' for you, if you will tell me how you know he was 'so sorry' that he had alarmed you."

"A rich bribe," said Cora, turning aside.

"Feeding your birds with shot, was he ?" continued he ; "and did he give you those flowers as an atonement ?"

Cora's cheeks were now of a deeper red, while she turned away half vexed.

"Well," said Mr. Clarendon, reaching for another branch, "I will drop that question. Only tell me the color of his eyes, his hair, and whether he wears coat, frock or roundabout ?"

"I don't know how to answer any of your important queries," answered Cora. "I didn't look at his eyes."

"It seems to me, Miss Cora, that no gentleman, exactly honorable, would sport so near your premises."

"I am sure he is honorable," said Cora, with some warmth.

"He says that he will never graze the feather of any bird, if I love its music. Let us go in, if you please. I lost the best branch I had."

"Shall I reach it again for you?"

"No," said Cora, her face averted. "I am tired."

Mr. Clarendon thought that she seemed also a little vexed. He soon turned the conversation, not forgetting the adventure of the sportsman. He had observed the violets before, but now he remarked that they were tied carefully, and had been cherished notwithstanding the berry and cherry picking. They came to the cottage well laden with fruit and in good humor, though a slight ripple had crossed the surface of their minds. Cora then superintended the tea arrangements; and so delicately and quietly was all managed, that she seemed to be here, there, and everywhere, without any apparent disturbance. When she came from her chamber the violets were missing, and Mr. Clarendon knew nothing of the care with which they were placed in a small vase, each little blue eye propped up in its nest of green.

Tea was served in a little room that looked upon a rose-terrace; the blinds of the windows, which extended to the piazza, were opened, and a refreshing breeze was admitted, which, coming over flowers, was sweet and grateful. The Colonel was delighted with Cora's success in housekeeping, and amazed that she could really work. Her hands were as white as ever, and what was sweeter than all, she was as cheerful as when no care occupied her mind. Mr. Clarendon was surprised at the energy Cora exhibited, for he had observed the change in their domestic arrangements, and knew that much must devolve upon her; knowing, also, how delicately she had been reared, he was astonished to find the Colonel's circumstances such as to require close economy—a condition worse from the great effort made to conceal his poverty. He observed that Cora was occasionally absent in mind, and was at times embarrassed if any mention was made of her long walks. He rallied her on the loss of her flowers,

and asked her if she expected to receive others as pretty the following day.

Tea being over, the Colonel and Mr. Clarendon took a stroll on the avenue, while Cora was left within doors. She had taught her little girl much that was useful, and was soon able to resort to a book on the piazza. In the meanwhile, the Colonel and his guest held a conversation upon matters of business.

Though Mr. Clarendon, in his leisure hours, embodied the idea of a gallant, yet out of the presence of the other sex, he was thoroughly the man of business; and as he now entered into conversation with Colonel Livingston, his bearing was stern and decisive, and it would have been difficult to have imagined him moved by beings of gentler sway. The Colonel gave his visitor to understand that his affairs had become recently embarrassed, and that the office which they had talked of, would be very desirable for him to hold until, at least, his lawsuit with Wilton was determined; and, if the case was decided adversely, that he should still require it for his support.

Mr. Clarendon informed him that it was necessary to court some influence in the matter, and that, unfortunately, his opponent, Mr. Wilton, was a competitor for the same place. He delicately hinted to the Colonel, that his pride would hinder him from taking the same measures that Wilton used to effect his ends, and that he feared he would fail for lack of exertion.

"I do not wish to grovel in the ditch for favor," said the Colonel. "I wish to be sure of your influence, I ask no more."

"You overrate my influence," said Mr. Clarendon. "I may pull some wires to your advantage, but you are too little known, my friend, and will, perhaps, lie still, while another steals the office."

"It is true," said the Colonel, "that I am helpless alone. My habits and life have unfitted me for strife; and a situation that compels me to use diplomacy, I would not seek. I could not flatter, fawn, or sell my rights of conscience."

"Colonel," said the guest, "you ought to have been a lord on British soil. You cannot sit and sip your choice Madeira, and expect an office to be presented unsought."

"I do not; but I wish you to act for me."

"I like your honesty," said Mr. Clarendon, with a shrug. "I should regret to see Wilton wrest everything from you. The very acres of yours which he holds, help him still further to wrong you."

"I need not the inducement of rivalry, Heaven knows, to urge me to exertion; and any course, consistent with honor and right, I am willing to pursue for the end I seek."

"Thank you, Colonel," replied the counsellor, with a laugh. "My conscience carries its own burden lightly—how it might fare with yours, is yet a problem. You remind me of the monkey with the chestnuts, but I can play puss, and, I think, not burn my fingers. But I believe the fable does not say which had the most conscience, the cat or the monkey, though I am inclined to think the former. But I suppose, Colonel, you now want money?"

"Why, Clarendon, you may know something of my situation. This long pending suit against Wilton has embarrassed me; nearly stripped me of funds. Yet I do not like to give it up. I may have to mortgage my place to relieve my situation. But this is confidential"—he continued in a whisper—"strictly so."

"How long is it since Wilton's wife left him?"

"In less than two years after their marriage."

"You had better advertise, to get her testimony."

"No," said the Colonel, nervously—"let her rest; whether in her grave, or in a living tomb."

Mr. Clarendon was puzzled by so singular a reply. It recalled to his mind rumors respecting the Colonel and Mrs. Wilton, in their early life.

"I will examine the points of your case thoroughly," said Mr. Clarendon, "and leave no stone unturned to prove the existence of this last will. I have never had but one opinion of the man. I always suspected a fraud. Why should he make such a misanthrope of himself, excepting when some hope of gain draws him out of his shell? They say that he walks with his arms folded for hours daily, like one in impenetrable gloom. His wife's strange disappearance may have somewhat affected him."

Colonel Livingston said little, but his manner betrayed much excitement of feeling. He walked his study with rapid strides, to which place they had resorted after their stroll, while his face turned pale, and his brow contracted. Mr. Clarendon knew that there was bitter enmity between the neighbors, and

sometimes fancied that there were hidden causes, as well as pecuniary interests, which made them foes. He found that neither question nor remark could draw from the Colonel any opinion relative to the wife of Mr. Wilton, whose elopement, years since, remained a mystery in the neighborhood, and even now a theme for gossip among the old families there residing. As Mr. Clarendon had resolved to return to the city in the night boat, he proposed to resort to the parlor, where he secretly hoped to find Cora. As yet he had not dared to manifest before the Colonel any preference for his daughter, and although he felt that he had reached the age that made haste excusable, still he was too politic to be precipitate in his movements, towards securing the prize he sought. As they stepped upon the piazza, Cora was reading. The twilight shades were deepening, and the moon cast her mellow light over the earth.

The weather was extremely warm, and the air had grown sultry since sundown. Not a breeze stirred leaf or flower. The mosquitoes and gnats were busy in the air, and much annoyed Cora. Still, her book was absorbing, and she patiently brushed them aside, and fixed her eyes more intently on her page. Frisk, Cora's dog, lay at her feet with his tongue out of his mouth, panting with the heat and exhaustion, from a long trot after a canine friend, from whom he had just parted. Old Sophy stood at the garden gate, with a high red and yellow turban, wiping her shiny face with the corner of her blue checked apron, while she mentioned to the scattering cows, on their road home, that "de wedder was oncommon warm." It was such weather as July not often gives us, and which the corn-raisers love, to ripen their silken ears. As Mr. Clarendon approached Cora, he brushed a leafy branch before her face, and said—"You will be eaten up here, Miss Cora. Motion is necessary to keep off these blood-thirsty invaders. If you will take a walk with me, before I return, I will protect you from the enemy, and we will enjoy a breeze from the water. You know that I have not seen the grotto that you promised to show me."

Cora exclaimed, "I am so exhausted with heat, that I shall be delighted to go. Poor Frisk is half dead too! It will yet be a lovely evening. Possibly we may have a shower by and by. Hark! I thought I heard a distant roll of thunder."

"We will not be absent long, Miss Cora; get your hat and mantle, and go with me—don't refuse," said Mr. Clarendon in an urgent tone.

Cora hesitated suddenly, although she had at first assented. She was sure that it would rain before they could return—but Mr. Clarendon laughed at her fears, and pointed to the western sky that yet glowed in the twilight. "That cloud is passing over, and will not refresh us ; so we might as well go to the river bank for water," said he, while he laid his hand upon Cora's bracelet.

Cora was finally persuaded, and closed her book. She was soon arrayed, and with a playful adieu to her father, accompanied Mr. Clarendon down the avenue. They reached the gate, where old Sophy stood, though the cows had all gone home, and as Cora and Mr. Clarendon passed her she observed that "de skitters is thick as niggers in Efrica."

This remark caused the latter more carefully to fold Cora's mantle about her neck, while he said, "I shall want you to sing for me when we reach the bank."

"The water and frogs will furnish us music enough, and if we are very romantic, we can listen to the 'melody of growing things.'"

"I do not think that my senses are sublimated enough for such music, and had rather any time hear a sweet girl sing, than the most energetic cabbage grow. I believe that imagination does not hold much sway over my cranium. I have little sympathy with poets or transcendentalists. But I suppose

'There is a pleasure in poetic pains
That none but poets know.'

I have lived long enough, Miss Cora, on dreams, and would like now a little reality."

"I believe I am too fond of dreaming," said Cora, "and when I come down here by the water alone, I become, sometimes, wild with strange bewildering thoughts."

"What do you think about," said Mr. Clarendon, now drawing Cora's arm within his.

"Oh ! of nothing that I can speak of. Our existence seems to me a greater mystery than any other. I wonder why such frail beings as we are should be put in this beautiful world to live and die, with so little knowledge of ourselves and of the future. Sometimes I sit by the side of the waves, and watch them ripple upon the shore, and my thoughts seem just like them, coming so fast, one after the other, only they are clear and transparent, and mine indistinct and misty, and aiming at

something which I can never reach. It is this limit which fetters my mind, that makes the thought of another world sometimes pleasant. We shall there have, I suppose, no shore to check the waves of thought."

"And what does all this thought end in, Cora? Does it not craze your mind to no purpose?"

"Oh! such thought is not unprofitable. It is sweet to know, if we cannot explore into these great mysteries, that there is One whose knowledge is infinite, and that He will teach us, and we can trust and live in Him; and if we are His children, that we are not, after all our ignorance, so helpless. Oh! it is pleasant, sometimes, to be alone, and think."

"You are a good little enthusiast, Cora; but your life leads you more to contemplation than those who live in the city's whirl and bustle. You ought to come to town, so that fancy and romance may not run away with reason."

"Is city life more rational than country life?" said Cora.

"Oh! city people know how to enjoy themselves better. I would rather cut off ten years of my existence than to live a hum-drum life in the country."

"I can't make the comparison," said Cora, simply, "as I have not known much of society in the world yet; but country life does not seem 'hum-drum' to me. Are the people so different in anything but their dress and style of living? What improves them in the city, Mr. Clarendon?"

"Action, Miss Cora; they do not rust for want of something to think of, something to do. They are interested and amused."

"I wonder, then, Mr. Clarendon, what the country was made so beautiful for? Why didn't God put Adam and Eve into a street of brick houses and omnibuses, instead of a garden full of flowers and animals, birds and running water. I don't believe that Eve would have liked the city pumps half so well as the waters of the shining-Euphrates."

"They would, at least, have needed better milliners if such had been their first habitation. I don't know how to answer your argument; but can only say that Adam and Eve were certainly very unsophisticated country people."

"But they were made in God's own image, and must have had minds to appreciate all that was most desirable."

"Why then, weren't they satisfied, instead of reaching after something else. I believe the big apple that they wanted was

the world after all, and that they stole the best typification of it within reach."

"But who showed it to them, Mr. Clarendon? Didn't Satan point it out? He then lives in this big apple, the world, and that is why you like it."

"That you think a home-thrust," said Mr. Clarendon, laughing; "but I must not be beaten by a woman, so I will retreat, with a promise to show you, some day, the attractions of our city world; but it is best for you that you sleep some time yet in your clover-patch; unless," he continued, with emphasis, "you have a guardian."

"We are now at my grotto," exclaimed Cora. "Isn't it a haunt fit for Queen Mab herself? Don't you wish you were king of this elfin realm?"

"I am afraid that, like the 'Culprit Fay,' I should love a mortal fairy; for I might rather follow her than to

'Follow fast and follow far,
Even the train of a shooting star.'

Trees, stars and water are admirable helps to a landscape, but they cannot avail a miserable bachelor much in the way of sympathy. Don't you think companionship more satisfying than this bull-frog music? and that a fine house in town would be more agreeable for a shelter than the most beautiful tree, wreathed with honeysuckles, every one a nest for a humming-bird?"

"I haven't thought much about such comparisons. I am never lonely, excepting that sometimes I feel the want of a brother or a sister. It took me a great while to glue on these shells. Don't they make a beautiful covering for my temple?"

"Very fanciful. I should think the crabs and snails would make a Mormon settlement here."

"Well, don't you admire the sweet vines that hang over it?" said Cora.

"I believe you think, Miss Cora," said Mr. Clarendon, "that if I had been placed in Eden, I should have first paid my homage to the flowers and lantern bugs, before making an acquaintance with my charming hostess."

"No, indeed," said Cora, laughingly. "I believe that you would have first been picking the apples. But you *must* think my Gothic temple pretty, or I shall be sorry that I came so far to show it to you."

The wooded hills threw their long shadows over the water, beneath the green and flowery slope on which they stood. The moon had emerged from the clouds which had partially obscured it, and was now shining in undimmed splendor upon the ripples near them. The breath of the summer night, though hot, was softly alluring, and they unconsciously lingered, watching the waves and fire-flies that claimed their home on the verdant shore. In this quiet spot, tenanted only by the swallows that skimmed the surface of the river, rested the light structure erected by the romantic fancy of Cora. It was covered with mosses of every beautiful variety, and glittered with brilliant stones and curious shells. The little white spires, made of specimens of quartz and isinglass, reflected in the moonbeams like those of a mimic cathedral, and the old moss clinging to the sides of the little temple, gave it all the ruin-like mystery that she could have craved. It was high enough to admit her to enter, and contained a rustic seat and a cushion for Frisk. Mr. Clarendon attempted an entrance but was forced to retreat.

It had been the combined work of the gardener and herself, and had occupied them several weeks in its construction.

"Shall I tell you what I would do with your shell baby-house?"

"Yes," said Cora, inquiringly.

"I would tear it all down, and throw the shells into the river."

"Why?" said Cora, half vexed.

"Oh, these fancies may do for Italy or the fairy isles of the sea; but on our river banks they had better, if built, be left for the beetles and bats. Who knows who may come here in this lonely place?"

"Then, you don't like my temple!" said Cora, with a half sigh.

"Perhaps, my dear girl, I have not appreciated it; but that cannot be said of its architect."

Cora now pleaded her father's solicitude as a reason for their return, and they left the grotto. As they neared the cottage, a young man, with a fishing rod, passed near the rambles; and as Cora had preceded Mr. Clarendon a few steps, he met her alone.

For an instant the two confronted each other. Their eyes met, and almost instantly, the knight of the rod said, while he

raised his cap, "Good evening ; are you alone ? Allow me to" —

But with a deep blush Cora bowed, and turned towards Mr. Clarendon. The latter stepped forward, and was about resenting what he deemed an insult, when Cora spoke hastily, and said, "Hush ! I beg of you." The next moment the young fisherman passed out of sight. "Cora," said her companion, "was that man insolent ?"

"Oh, no," she replied, "he thought that I was alone."

"Then why did he speak, do you know him ?" inquired Mr. Clarendon.

"I have seen him before ; he has been fishing," answered Cora.

"He is, perhaps, the sportsman ?" Cora did not reply, and Mr. Clarendon marvelled who this wood-acquaintance was, that certainly seemed in favor with his young friend. The wanderers were now overtaken by a sudden shower, and as the big drops came down, Mr. Clarendon drew the mantle of Cora tightly about her. They hastened forward, while he encouraged Cora, whose fears were often excited by a thunder-storm. A vivid flash of lightning now gleamed in their faces, succeeded by a loud clap of thunder, which reverberated through the hills in peal after peal. Cora grew pale, and trembled, but hastened forward, while the storm increased, and the rain commenced pouring in torrents. The latter knew the danger of seeking shelter in the woods, and stopped beneath a frame-work of timber, thinking it best here to remain, until the Colonel sent them protection, or a carriage. But they had not long been beneath the wood-work, before the young man that they had met, appeared in view with an umbrella in his hand, which he presented Cora, and hastily vanished, unprotected, in the rain.

Mr. Clarendon could not see the face of the stranger, except as the lightning flashes revealed a pair of searching eyes beneath the folds of a cloak which he wore upon his reappearance. They seemed to dwell alone upon Cora, and the hand that raised the umbrella for a moment touched hers. As Cora's low "thank you," met his ear, he said, "I foresaw the storm, and knew you must be overtaken by it." Mr. Clarendon now knew that he had procured the umbrella for Cora, and had hastened to meet her. He was not much pleased with the adventure, but glad of the protection

afforded. They reached home in safety, stopping as they approached the cottage to take from the gardener a shawl and a pair of thicker shoes for Cora, which had there reached them.

The shower had come upon them so suddenly, that they could hardly realize having so recently enjoyed the moonlight, and were now glad of a shelter within doors. Wet garments were laid aside, the dripping umbrella left in the care of Sophy, while both wanderers had a breathless tale to relate of their surprise, and the luckless storm which had overtaken them. Old Sophy came in "wid somethin' hot, to keep out de wet," and the gardener stood with the door wide open, to know if "they catched it pretty smart," while the Colonel expostulated on their imprudence, for "he had known all day, that they would have a shower before night," a warning which he had not thought of giving in time. The little girl in the Holland apron, was "mighty glad Miss Cora had got home," and a time they had of it, dripping, shaking themselves, and talking. And with it all, no one but Cora wondered how the young man that brought her the umbrella reached home in the hard rain without one. Being sheltered, and fairly dry, the shower was pronounced a glorious one; and now that Cora was safely at home, by her fond parent's knee, where, since a child, she had ever retreated in a thunder-storm, the paleness passed from her cheek, and the tremor from her frame. She even looked out upon the storm, and heard the musical pattering of the rain against the windows and rustling trees, with grateful composure.

Mr. Clarendon looked at his watch, and hoped that the shower was almost over, for the hour drew near when he must seek the boat. The Colonel was reluctant to have him go, and Cora asked him to stay until morning; but Mr. Clarendon now rarely allowed pleasure to interfere with his business engagements, though the witching tones, breathed in the sweet low "don't go," of Flora, had been sometimes potent to charm him into forgetfulness of all else. "Poor Flora!" his heart often whispered, "who will be ever dear as thou wert?" But there was another, whose heart he deemed worth his wooing, and he trusted, that in time, his judgment would rule his passion for one that honor bade him shun. Cora, he saw, was different from Flora, as the light of day contrasts with the brilliancy of night, though he believed the

light of one no purer than of the other. He contrasted his own home with the cheerful hearth of the Colonel, that he was now about leaving, and he saw Cora made up all its joyousness. She seemed to him a treasure beyond price, and he desired to secure her, ere the world had tainted her pure heart, or the love of another had entered it. With these thoughts he bade her adieu.

CHAPTER X.

*The best enjoyment is half disappointment
To that we mean, or would have in this world.*

BAILEY'S FERTUS.

TWO months now passed since Mr. Clarendon first visited Villacora. His persuasive plausibility had ingratiated him much in the good will and favor of the Colonel, who wholly leaned upon him for support and counsel. He had in the meanwhile aided him in procuring an office that gave him a small income, and encouraged him to believe that he would eventually regain the estate of his father. He had never recurred to his own hopes, but often spoke of the advantages of wealth and position, and invariably left the Colonel in a restless, feverish mood—his mind bent on the one aim of his life, to recover his old family estate, while he harassed himself by the impression, that by the world he was considered a disgraced and disinherited son, while his enemy and the usurper of his fortune was rewarded for his virtue and good deeds by his parent.

Mr. Clarendon knew that his conversation had its influence upon a man at once ambitious and indolent, aristocratic and poor, who possessing the consciousness of bitter injury, still felt the inability to redress his wrongs. He knew that he was strongly desirous of prosecuting his suit, while his limited pecuniary resources forbade the continued expense.

Circumstances had given a different tone to the character of Edward Livingston, than seemed natural to those who had known him in earlier years. His prospects of wealth had been wrecked, and the circumstances which separated him, at the same time from the affianced bride of his youth, gave a blight

to his destiny, from which he had never recovered. He considered himself a cipher in the world, where he expected to stand pre-eminent, and being proud by nature, in bitterness of spirit he sunk into gloomy seclusion; a disappointed man.

From this grave of despondency he was drawn by Mr. Clarendon, whose ambition to marry his daughter, led him to interest himself in the retrieval of his fortune. The Colonel prided himself upon being descended from Scotch nobility, and from a branch of the Livingston stock, untainted by low blood. But it availed him little in sustaining his position, and so with heavy embarrassments, he secluded himself from society, while he indolently nursed the ever waking dream of recovering his estates.

But lethargy and gloom had begun to enwrap him as with a veil, when a renewal of intercourse with Mr. Clarendon roused him from his stupor, in the hope of securing his aid and influence.

After his early disappointment, which much affected his mind, he married a distant connection of the name of Livingston. She possessed sufficient wealth to give him, without exertion on his part, a home and competence; which limited means afforded him a support after her death. He retained, also, with her property, the family silver, handed down from the same line from whom he claimed parentage, and some family portraits which he highly prized.

His old love was too recent to be soon rooted from his breast, and although his beautiful bride was respected and beloved, she never held the same place in his heart, and her early death made her existence seem but as a dream. But she left him a legacy richly prized, an idol that soothed his regret, for her loss. To his little Cora, whom he named for her mother, he devoted himself with assiduous care; and so indulgently gratified her whims, that but for her sweetness of disposition, she would have been early spoiled. All around her were made subject to her will and infant caprices, and the stamp of her tiny foot was law in the nursery and parlor. But the little ~~Cora~~ was not naturally imperious; her willfulness was tempered by generosity and gentleness, and her love for her father, the ruling passion of her infancy and childhood. She was the pet, too, of all visitors who came to Villacora, while her beauty was so much praised, that, in her childhood, she would stand on tip-toe to reach a mirror to see her much talked of curls and dimples, which ceremony she made Frisk also perform for

the same vain purpose. As Cora grew older, her father's gloom increased. He felt that the time was approaching when she must suffer with himself. His only hope was that in an early and prosperous marriage she would escape the misery of poverty. He endeavored to foster pride of family in her character, while in the very atmosphere of love which she breathed, she was made to feel how essential the last was to her existence. He talked much to her of her family, of her noble descent, and endeavored to engender a spirit of dislike towards those of a different grade. Colonel Livingston was a thorough aristocrat. Cora, in this respect, more resembled her mother, who possessed true humility of character, with sufficient self-respect to sustain herself with grace and dignity. She visited the poor as well as the rich, and every one loved the daughter, while many feared the proud, stately father.

As a child, Cora received many chidings from the latter for her vulgar tastes, and for a while would affectedly toss her little head when she passed some poor villager, and even tell Frisk not to go with little vulgar puppies, that he was "an Ivingston doggy;" but the native sweetness and affability of her character were soon apparent, and her airs never offended, though they might occasion a smile, while the ladylike, yet volatile, little Cora soon learned to discriminate for herself, and without displeasing her father, secured the good will of all about her.

In the neighborhood of the Colonel's residence, high back on rising ground, surrounded by forest trees of the growth of centuries, stood a dwelling of elegant proportions. Around it was a broad colonnade, supported by pillars of elaborate workmanship. Wings extended from the main building, commanding a view unsurpassed on the Hudson. Its waters were here seen coursing through banks of brilliant verdure, above which rose hillock, hill, and mountain, in undulating beauty. Higher up, the scenery was more sublime, more lofty in its grandeur, but every feature essential to the picturesque, was seen from the grand old windows of Wilton Park. Perfectly trimmed slopes of vivid green once extended from terrace to terrace, down to the water, through which, gravelled walks bordered by boxwood and evergreens, afforded easy access to the river; but now these slopes were neglected, and were full of underbrush, and in the stone walks the grass was fast growing up, and in some places nearly covered the pathway. The remnants of blooming shrubs were left about the grounds, but grew, evi-

dently, without care or culture. On the more retired part of the place, where old willows drooped heavily to the earth, were visible, under the dense shade, some old marble monuments in an iron inclosure. The ashes of the Livingston family lay beneath.

This country seat was now the home of Mr. Roger Wilton, and his son, and went, generally, by the name of "The Park." At the period of this tale, in one of its apartments three gentlemen sat at breakfast, taking their coffee, while they read the morning news, talked of Congressional matters, or laughed over an amusing anecdote that met the eye. Mr. Wilton was a lawyer by profession, having the bearing of a gentleman, with a dignified person and reserved manners. He appeared to have numbered five-and-forty years. His brother, who bore the general cognomen of Uncle Peter, was a corpulent, good-humored bachelor of fifty, with a rubicund visage, twinkling blue eyes, dressed, as usual, in a blue coat and buff breeches. His occupation was betrayed in the trade and barter schemes that seemingly filled his head, and who thought of the weather only as it might affect the wave of his prosperity on land or sea, or of internal improvements, as they influenced the value of his real estate. The youngest of the trio was the son of the former, and in the June of his existence, if not the sunniest of Junes. He resembled his father in his tall stature and erect bearing, though his face was said to be much like his mother's and her family. His features had a regular and strong outline, best exhibited in profile, with eyes large, deeply and darkly fringed, wearing an expression generally sad, but when animated, earnest and brilliant. Like that of his mother, his brow was broad and open, presenting a cast of features rather severe than otherwise. He was not generally called handsome, and was considered, by strangers, inaccessible and haughty; an impression partly arising from his reserved manners, and indifference to pleasing. There was an unstudied carelessness in his air and dress, which exhibited a disregard to forms and customs. His temperament was ardent, with a fervent imagination and keen sensitiveness to the trials peculiar to his destiny. He knew that he was left motherless in his infancy, but why he was forsaken had been ever a dark mystery to him. He knew that his mother's elopement from her home and child had furnished a theme for curious speculation, but that scandal had never tarnished her good name.

The destiny of one whom fancy painted with every endearing attribute, caused him hours of sadness and deep rumination. He wondered why her history was one on which his father preserved such unbroken silence, and why her loveliness of character had never been dwelt upon by his reserved parent during his years of infancy, or in his subsequent unloved and motherless boyhood. Deeper and more interesting became the question as years passed on, and he knew no answer to the query that burned in his brain, "Is my mother dead or among the living?" This was the mystery that made older the young heart of Rufus Wilton—a mystery which was nursed by questions and surmises from rumor's tongue, which had never ceased to murmur its tales respecting his ill-fated parent.

But a nature naturally glad and buoyant was not always clouded; his pursuits were active, his mind energetic, and his taste for the beautiful so keen and absorbing that he rarely lacked some resource of enjoyment, though repelled by the coldness of an unsympathizing father from companionship at home.

Through the liberality of an absent uncle, a brother of his mother's, he had received a liberal education, and had since spent three years in foreign travel, and recently returned home. He found there no affectionate heart to greet him; and, for a substitute, was not ungrateful for the noisy good nature of his bachelor uncle, who, next to his speculations, liked his nephew better than any other object of preference. Having no pursuit, he turned his attention to gunning, fishing, and riding about the neighborhood of his father's place.

Thus he occasionally fell in with Cora on his rambles; when, on one occasion, the tenderness of her imploring appeal to spare the bird at which he had aimed, while unconscious that she was near him, completed the conquest that her beauty had hitherto more than half won. When he looked upon her, her hands were momentarily clasped, and a crimson blush mantled her cheek at her impulsive entreaty.

He instantly lowered his gun, and approaching her, said, "Have I alarmed you?"

"A little," said Cora, confusedly. "I love to hear the birds sing."

"Then I will never graze another feather of them," replied the young man. "You have my word."

Cora had been walking on the border of the woods adjoining

her father's place, and thought she was alone, until her attention was arrested by a figure before her, with a hunting-coat and sporting equipments, who aimed at a pretty robin on a branch within view. Cora knew all the nests on the place, and before she considered that she was addressing a stranger, had begged him not to shoot the bird. Cora smiled her thanks, and turned to go, when young Wilton detained her, and said :

"I saw some beautiful violets by the path I came ; let me get some for you. I know you like flowers." As the last words were spoken, a smile passed over his face, and as he offered them he waited a moment to see her look up. Her eyes were raised as he spoke, and Rufus Wilton thought them bluer and more dewy than the violets. Cora did not remain long, but it took a few moments to arrange the flowers, they were such straggling things, with their long stems ; even if his powder-horn had not caught in the fringe of her mantle, while they together admired the blue-eyed violets, and he the blue-eyed beauty.

But while we have digressed, the Wilton party are yet at the breakfast table. Conversation had merged into neighborhood gossip, on the part of uncle Peter and his nephew ; the elder brother having resorted to a newspaper for entertainment.

"Rufus," said the uncle, "I saw Sapp's daughter last night. The old fellow is rich. How would you like to handle his doubloons, eh, Rufe ? Sally, you know, will be his sole heiress. A fit will take him off some day."

"Yes. Miss Sally is a showy girl ; sparkles like a Falls river diamond."

"Like the real stun. I say, Rufe, she'll own a plantation of darkies in Cuby. If I was an extravagant young scamp like you, I shouldn't be long calculating the chances of that speculation."

"By what rule would you figure it up ?" said Rufus, balancing his spoon on his cup. "Weigh her on a pair of hay-scales, I suppose, first ; then ascertain if the proportion of the darkies to the pound, will pay for the expense of supporting her and her canine pets. Is this the way you would 'calculate the speculation ?'"

"Why, that wouldn't be a bad way to heft her—she's solid—nothing flimsy-flimsy about her—something tangible—a

foundation to build on that won't break nor melt—quantity as well as quality. Hair as black as a crow's tail, as the poet says ; and eyes like a lackaware tea-caddy."

"You seemed to have scanned the attraction of the young lady narrowly, but the likeness of the crow extends further, I believe, than her tresses. Hasn't her voice the same melody?"

"Crow or snipe, she is a pretty bird, and you'd fare well to trap her. Let me see, she'll be worth"—The old uncle seemed lost in a mathematical problem.

"Your time and trouble," said Rufus, while he rose from the table.

"Well, well, don't go, Rufe. Have you seen Livingston's darter since you come back?—she's a cunning little duck of a thing—light as a sparrow, and plump as a partridge—poor though—never will be worth the first brass cent."

"What's that about Livingston?" said Mr. Roger Wilton, throwing down his paper.

"Oh, nothing ; your boy and I was having a talk about the neighborhood gals, Sapp's and Livingston's."

"I hear that Mr. Clarendon is eyeing the advantages of that connection," said the brother. "I wasn't aware that the gentleman was of so domestic a turn. A dance he'll lead a wife."

"Like a Scotch reel, first with one partner, then with another," said uncle Peter.

The young gentleman now opened the door to go ; but a wink and nod from the latter, drew him laughing to his elbow. The father was now in a window-seat behind a newspaper.

The uncle then drew out of his pocket various articles, first, a bandanna handkerchief, with gingerbread squares stamped upon it. Then an old leather account-book, a round snuff-box, and a roll of tobacco, and, lastly, a piece of newspaper, which he untied, carefully removing the twine, exhibiting to view a lock of black hair, which he held under the table, lest his brother should see it. Then smoothing over his knee the shining tress, gave a sideways squint to Rufus, who was attempting to suppress a laugh, while he whispered "She gave it to me, but it gets mussed up in my pocket, and I'm afraid will hang out sometime, when I'm careless. You keep it."

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Mr. Wilton smiled, but Uncle Peter was in some doubt as to amiability conveyed in his expression, but inwardly chucking his own luck in concealing Miss Sally's hair, and the finesse with which he had escaped the derision of his brother, and hemmed assent to his august relative's opinions, and then left to attend to his mercantile affairs. There was no congeniality between the brothers; they were widely separated, and had been differently educated.

The door closed after Uncle Peter, the latter laid down his head, when the following reflections passed through his mind: "No intelligence has ever been received from the absent brother; if he never appears, all is for ever safe—lucky that my wife of mine never saw it, that I had too much wit to tell her a woman." He then passed hours in absorbing thought, his brow was knit, save when an occasional gleam of triumph came over his face. He paced room after room, his elegant home, with the tread of one whose mind was not at the footsteps. He looked through the ample windows, which opened upon the colonnade of the dwelling, and surveyed the extensive grounds, spread over rich wooded and pasture lands, where lofty trees cast their shade, possessing in their venerated associations great value in the estimation of his neighbor Colonel Livingston.

"Peter," thought he to himself, "to be the owner of this estate, than a beggar, an humble dependent on the charities of a benevolent world, or the bounty of a Livingston. Here a bitter sarcasm breathed on the lip of Roger Wilton. Dark thoughts settled over his mind, when his cheek and his stern lips grew white.

A servant enters his apartment, and announces the arrival of a visitor. Mr. Wilton was again the cautious, reserved, uncommunicative man. Courteous he might be called, but not cordial. The hollow word of welcome came from his lips, never rose from his heart. But for his son, 'The young man' would have been rarely frequented, and during his absence had been, but for his servants, a solitary abode. Austere, and cynical as he was deemed by his fellow men, he was nevertheless correct in his dealings, and sagacious and far-seeing

Rufus shook his head, and, in spite of precaution, gave a shout of merriment which much disconcerted uncle Peter, who had one eye constantly on the newspaper in front of him, while in his right hand, by one end, he held the streaming lock, much as he would a live eel that he was afraid would squirm away from him. Uncle Peter gave a beseeching look to his nephew, seeming to beg of him to dispose of the hair, which was abundant enough for a small periwig, and now that it was suspended, difficult to replace without observation ; but Rufus was merciless, and left his gallant uncle to suffer the consequences of his imprudence, his bachelor relative meanwhile stuffing tobacco, snuff-box, twine, and hair promiscuously in his pocket, over which he tucked the weed perfumed bandanna.

Soon after the nephew returned for his riding-whip. The same moment uncle Peter emerged from the stairway leading to the kitchen, a strong smell of burnt hair following him.

"What's that smell?" said Mr. Wilton, the elder, holding his cambric to his nose.

"The cat's singed her back, that's all," said uncle Peter, turning red and warm, while he busied himself with his dickey at the glass.

Rufus came at the moment forward and whispered, "I'll tell her, before night, how you treat her tokens, and then see if you get a chance to 'singe the cat's back' again."

Uncle Peter looked some wise, and some savage, whereupon Rufus escaped.

After the latter went out, Mr. Wilton addressed his mercantile brother in his usual dignified, half sarcastic tones, while he said :

"Peter, your matrimonial schemes are laid so deep they can hardly fail of success. If the boy will marry, this young lady would make a prudent connection for him—afford some compensation for the incumbrance. I have balanced the matter in my mind, and think that her maintenance would, with her means, leave a surplus in his hands, and by strengthening his income, prevent no encroachments on my estate, which I do not wish to see squandered. I approve of the connection, and Capt. Sapp is of the same mind, therefore I wish no jesting to occur in his presence respecting the lady. Respecting this pretty paragon, Miss Livingston, I have not the honor of her acquaint-

ance, therefore cannot say whether she wears wings or not."

Mr. Wilton smiled, but Uncle Peter was in some doubt as to the amiability conveyed in his expression, but inwardly chuckling at his own luck in concealing Miss Sally's hair, and the shrewdness with which he had escaped the derision of his brother, bowed and hemmed assent to his august relative's opinions, and soon after left to attend to his mercantile affairs.

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in all moneyed transactions ; and as his lugubrious moods affected no one but himself, he escaped with but little criticism.

He had little intercourse with his own sex, and the society of women he shunned as a pestilence. He aimed to preserve a character for strict integrity, and was never known to deviate from the moral code by which he professed to be governed.

He was proud of a son for whom he never exhibited a ray of affection ; and as his heir, watched his career with interest. As the future inheritor of his estate he regarded him with consideration, and was not indifferent to the estimation in which he was held by others.

After Rufus had left his father and uncle, he went to the stable for his horse for a ride. Here a conversation ensued with Jerry, the groom, on the beauty and speed of Charlie, and a colloquy respecting matters in general, all of which do not interest the reader, and which ended in "Away ! away ! Charlie."

CHAPTER XI.

Oh, there's nothing half so sweet in life,
As love's young dream.

MOORE.

BUT half a mile, my reader, from Villacora, you will find Goody Burke's cottage ; and though you may be fastidious about your acquaintances, it is important, on some accounts, that the introduction should be made. She has a neat little cot, where clover scents the air, and where wild flowers grow as luxuriantly as in a Western prairie. But clovers and buttercups are not all the children of Flora that the old dame has about her ; hollyhocks and sunflowers stand around, like sentinels on parade ; and there is a regiment of them. Daffodils, or 'daffy's,' as the old lady calls them, glitter like gold in the sun ; while marigolds and poppies seem striving to thrust their crimson and yellow faces in the old dame's low windows. Such disorderly arrangement might have indicated a want of system in the widow's horticultural taste ; but she says that she has had the "rheumatis" all

winter, and should have "died off" if it hadn't have been for little Cory Livingston that cured her up, and so she says, "things will run to waste, come what will." She now sits, wearing a cap white as her daisies, a blue checked gown, a brown Holland apron, and silver spectacles across her nose, in a big arm-chair in the doorway. A yellow cat lies at her feet, and by her bed, covered with a blue and white quilt, stands a little table, with an old clasped Bible upon it. Near her, on a low, wicker chair, Cora Livingston sits, opening a basket full of nice bits for the old woman.

"See here, Goody," she said, "see what I have brought you; throw aside your knitting, and help me unpack. Here's a nice stool for your feet; but first I'll open the window to let in the smell of your flowers."

"Oh, child, I'm a poor critter anyway. That cat's in the basket, as sure as her name is Bess—*scat—scat*. My posies are growin' the way God lets 'em; they sows their own seeds and huddles up their own fashion. I hain't got much but some feather-few and tanzy, and a trifle of dill; the neighbors like it for go-to-meetin' seed, when they are outer orange peels. My sweet peases didn't come up, and my ragged robins wilted, and the marigooles poke indoors as much out. The grass has run inter the stuns, and the gate slams and bangs, cause the old flatiron's broken off the chain; but my old back's so lame I can't mend up, nor do nothing. O, Lord o' mercy, the grass will run over my grave 'fore apple time."

"Oh, Goody, you are always groaning. Cheer up and come here."

Cora spread out the contents of her basket on the table. "I've come to talk to you," she said, "so you must be good natured. You've a great many nice flowers. I want you to give me some slips of that yellow rose-bush. You will be out scratching in your flower-bed soon. Here's some tea for you—shall I make you a cup?"

"If you can, my old back's so lame. The tea-kettle lid's off, and so I puts my old man's profile on instead; it was cut after he lost his hair, and them nigger cuts ain't got no 'spression about 'em; steaming won't hurt it, the back's tinned. Lord child, you can't lift it. Get out the way, Bess, you'r always under foot. There, I've got it on, spite o' my back. You've bro't a lot o' things Frisk lugged it, I s'pose. I thought so, by Bess's backing up. I hope he didn't put his nose in. Here's

chicken, sugar, tea, jelly, wine, and pickles, and some pepper vinegar. It's strange you couldn't ha' knowed what I wanted."

"You didn't tell me that you wanted anything, Goody," said Cora.

"Lor', here's everything—thousands of it; but I kinder tho't some salt fish would taste good."

Salt fish was the last thing that Cora had thought of, and didn't like to think of anything so unsavory in her sweet basket; but she promised to send some as soon as she reached home.

She soon made a cup of tea, and a piece of toast for the lame old woman, and after giving some milk to the cat, that kept purring around her feet, she seated herself with her needle and cambric by the side of Goody, to talk to her.

She had thrown aside her hat, and, after smoothing back her hair with her fingers, commenced conversation.

"Tell me more," said she, "about that lady that ran away from her husband so long ago—that beautiful Mrs. Wilton. Do you think she is living? Do tell me all about her. Everybody says that you know."

"Oh, it's so long ago, child—she was just such a chirk thing as you be, when I knew her, but her hair and eyes was browner than yours—not so much like my copper tea-kettle when it's bright, but she had as much on't, only she wound it in long braids, like old time picturs, round her head—it didn't fly about so crazy like as yours. She was taller, too, than you be, and bigger. Her eyes used to shine, when she talked about Ned Livingston. Lord, child, that's your pa now; how things does come about! But her spark went off, and some how she married that old hypocrite down yonder—but his boy is likely, all owin' to his mother. Well, but he's grown up now; that was near three-and-twenty year ago, and a likely boy he is, just like his beautiful mother, and I hated to have him go off to furrin parts."

"Was she young?" said Cora, looking up under her wet eyelashes."

"Young and pretty as a mornin' glory; but a red tulip didn't look prouder than she did, when she tossed back her head full of slick, shiny hair, and put out her red lip when she warn't pleased; but then she smiled so sweet, that nobody minded her pouts, and the fellows were glad if she'd look at 'em any way."

"Did papa love her too, Goody?"

"Lord, child! what a question! Your pa got married to a nice, beautiful woman, and he's an old man, e'en a' most—what matter is it what gals he liked?"

Cora thought that she would like to know all about it.

"You've seen Rufus, I 'spose," the old woman went on, "he comes to see me when he goes about gunnin' and fishin'—I wish he'd get some steady business. He acts sorter lost, and don't dress slick as he might, but he don't care, so he's easy and clean. I don't like them blowsy things he wears—There he is!" she exclaimed. "Miss Cory, I was with her when Rufus was born, but she warn't glad if 'twas her first young 'un. I took care of her, and where do you think Squire Wilton was all the time? Why, gone to the city, without a squint at the boy, and she might a-died for all he knew or cared. Give me my handkercher—If that cat ain't lyin' on't!"

"Wall, when the baby was along about teething time, she (the old woman now leaned forward and whispered) *just slipped off*, and everybody had their own stories to tell, but little they knew about it—they didn't get much out o' me. Some said she was crazy, and some said she liked her old spark, and some said the Squire worried the life out of her; but she didn't tell me to tell all I knew, and I didn't know as it was anybody's business in particular, and so I let 'em guess what they could, for all me. But I know this, she warn't one to be trod on. Well, she left her baby, and she gave me a heap o' money first, and said the Lord would bless me if I took care of it; but when I took him out o' the cradle, after she left, his prettiest curl right on his forehead was gone—it made me cry to think how she felt when she clipped it—well, if she didn't see him again, it wasn't my fault. But I suppose she's dead 'fore now. After she went away, Squire Wilton made me move off in a desput hurry one day, so that I lost half my cheeny packin' it. Give me my specs. He'll ride that horse to death."

At this moment Rufus Wilton entered the wicket gate, saying, "Good morning Goody—your old gate slams as bad as ever. Any rest for wearied bones in your cot?"

"I guess 'twont be the first time I've rested your bones, and trotted you inter the bargain," said the old woman, hobbling to the door, forgetting her "rheumatiz."

"Well," said the young man laughing, "I've had the trotting this morning from Charly—so now I'll take the rest." As he spoke, he came into the porch, with his cap in one hand and riding-whip in the other, wiping his forehead, from which the morning breeze had laid back his hair, while he made some ejaculation on the heat of the morning.

Cora blushed deeply as he entered, when with a bow and smile, he for the first time accosted her as Miss Livingston.

"I have not brought you the fish I promised," said he turning to the old lady. "Have had bad luck lately."

"Oh! Rufus," said she, "why don't you go to work?—I never knew a man or boy that waited on a fish-pole all day, come to any good end."

"Sad prophecy, Goody! what do you think, Miss Livingston?"

"I think the fishes come to a bad end at least," answered Cora with a smile.

Rufus shook his head, and laughingly declared that he feared that he was getting into bad repute with his idle habits. He then went into an ironical discussion on the benefits arising from sporting in general, which the old woman took literally, much to Cora's amusement, especially when he declared his intention of building a fishing hut by the water, that he might sleep there, and be up early to get a bite.

"Oh! Rufus! Rufus!" cried the old woman, "what are you coming to!"

"Don't look so alarmed, Goody," said the young man, taking the old yellow cat up by her fore paws, while he looked significantly at Cora. "My reformation has already commenced; don't you hear the birds sing more gaily than they did?—the robins especially; what do you say?" he continued, addressing Cora.

"I have not heard your gun lately," she replied, while she put on her straw gipsy.

Wilton rose as Cora bade the old lady good morning, and told her that he had found a new path through the woods, and that it was much pleasanter than the road, and begged the pleasure of showing it to her.

Cora did not decline, and they walked out together. The 'new path' was not far distant, and as Wilton assured Cora that it was the pleasantest and shadiest, she was willing to be guided through it. It might appear strange that she should

so readily accept the civilities of a stranger, but some indefinable magnetism had done more in the way of an introduction than the courteous civilities of a thousand go-betweens. No gallantry, flattery, or even civil words, had been the passport of the young man to her favor, but her frame had thrilled at the glance of his large eyes, and the tones into which his voice seemed to change as he addressed her, like chain lightning played on the chords of her heart, and electrified her being. They soon found the shady road that wound into the deep, green woods, and Cora never knew until now how she might have been covered with burs and thistles but for the vigilance of her companion ; how surely she would have been thrown from many a rolling log but for the strong hand that held her own so securely, while she waved like a fairy to and fro, as her light step bounded from one to another—for the 'new path' which her escort had chosen was no path at all, but simply a way that squirrels might have taken on a chestnut hunt. But then she might never have known, but for her companion, where the prettiest wild flowers grew, such as she could never have found alone, scarcely knowing how much their value was enhanced by the presentation of the giver. Neither did she know how delicious was a ramble in the woods at that hour, so much more so than by the water at moonlight. The way they took was sequestered, and led deeply into the wood. Wilton did not offer Cora his arm, but had enough to do, in his attentions, at single file, only that he did not go as the Indians do, straight ahead. Their first course was through a grove of evergreens, where the balsam fir and spruce make the air balmy and sweet ; they picked the buds, and gathered some of the freshest and greenest shoots, which were good to twirl in their fingers, if for nothing more. Then they came to ascending ground, which overlooked the distant hills, and the tree-tops waving in the mid-day breeze ; then Cora followed Wilton down a ledge of rocks like steps, and here she would assuredly have fallen, but for the guardianship of her careful guide ! Strange that she was so much more helpless than ten years before, when, like a bounding fawn, she had jumped from crag to crag ! But, with the aid of her vigilant friend, she came safely into the green shade below, where a crystal brook ran along by their side. It was such a sweet, cool spot here, under the tall trees, through which the sun came in golden streaks ! And the water was so limpid and clear that they

were tempted to tread each brilliant stone that lay bathed in the gushing flood. Here they rested from their fatigue. The shade was so dense that the green was almost gloom ; even the little birds were still in their leafy nests. The sun was now high in the heavens, but they knew nothing of its sultry beams, and scarcely saw the clouds that hung motionless in the skies. Cora sat down on an old stump that Wilton had found for her ; but consciousness that she was imprudent in lingering, caused her soon to rise and hasten forward. She felt that she had already loitered too long, and that she ought to have taken the old road. But Cora was only sixteen, and in her pure-hearted guilelessness, placed confidence in one that seemed so kind and good. There was certainly nothing that Wilton neglected for her comfort ; and she believed he would almost have carried her himself, if she had needed such assistance. And then he amused her by his comments on all she did and said, and seemed so much at home in her old favorite haunts, and liked as well as she did to scramble in uncertain places, that she felt as if they had been always together, and that it was quite right that they should be.

But Rufus Wilton knew the wild path as well out of the woods as into it, though he was more loth to find it. He never, in all the drawing-rooms of city life, could have become so well acquainted with the beautiful little sylph, that he felt he could like to take a trip through life with. He had never been so happy ; and neither in Europe nor America had he ever found so fascinating a wood nymph as the sweet girl that bade him adieu, her hands full of wild flowers, at the gate of the cottage.

Cora was soon in the presence of her father. She had left home early, and it was now past their hour of dining. She came in with a bounding step, her glad face brilliant with the glow of exercise and happiness. She was met by Sophy with innumerable questions about "master's dessert," and the dinner, which she had totally forgotten, and complaints of the "little girl," who had broke dishes, spilt milk, and been "sassy into the bargain," during her absence. That little Judy was a great trial, as well as a little "help," she often realized, but she was in such an amiable, pleasant mood, that she sweetly said, "Never mind, Sophy, Judy will learn better by-and-by." She now thought of her neglect, and of the cause of it. Had she come by the old way, she would have been at home in season,

and all her domestic duties been performed, and, perhaps, saved some trouble between Sophy and Judy, who never did, and she feared never would, agree. But Cora had not yet felt the worst consequences of her imprudence.

Her father accosted her with anxious inquiries relative to her long stay. "I have been quite alarmed about you," said he. "Goody must have new food for gossip ; or, has it taken you so long to pick those straggling weeds. You must have wandered far. Pray, where did you find your flowers ? Not on the road to Mrs. Burke's."

"Oh, no, papa," she replied, "I came a new way home. I didn't think that it would take me so long, it was shadier and "——

Cora stopped ; she felt awkwardly about explaining how she was induced to return by a new path, and yet did not intend to conceal anything.

"You were imprudent, my daughter, to come alone through the wood."

Cora re-arranged her flowers, and was still silent ; but at length said, "Some one from Mrs. Burke's showed me the way."

"One of the neighborhood boys, I suppose ? Very imprudent, my daughter, quite so ; the wood is full of snakes, and there can be no path at all. If you had had a protector with you "——

Cora felt guilty ; but knowing her father's punctilious ideas of propriety and ceremony as to forming acquaintances, she feared his displeasure, and simply said, "I came home very well. I am afraid you will have a poor dinner, papa. Will fruit answer to-day for your dessert ?"

"Yes, Cora, and see, dear, that that child don't tear up my newspapers so much. She has been swinging on the gate all the morning, when she hasn't been breaking dishes, and quarrelling with Sophy. You must train her better, my daughter. She's demure as a saint ; but I think she's deceitful."

Cora felt her own course had not been fairly open ; but he had trials enough while she was away, and she did not like to further annoy him. Still her mind was ill at ease. But she resolved not to be again imprudent, and so she quieted her conscience, and made what reparation she could for her neglect, by extra diligence ; and although dinner was an hour later than the usual time, still it was in satisfactory order.

During the repast, her father told her that he had received a note from Mr. Clarendon, who was coming to visit them that evening. "Dress yourself with care, my daughter," he added, as he left the dining-room for his study.

Cora's face was serious as she heard the announcement. She hoped to have had a quiet afternoon with her work and her own thoughts, and knew that Mr. Clarendon was one who required her attention. She had hitherto found him pleasant; but to-day felt annoyed at the proposed visit, and hoped that something would occur to prevent it. She amused herself by arranging her flowers, chirping to Minnie, and playing with her dog after dinner, which gave encouragement to Judy to scrape the fruit plates, more for her own palate than for the sake of clearing the table; and when Cora indolently laid back her head on the sofa pillow, and half shut her eyes, to dream of a pair she could not forget, mightily was the vision disturbed by the way and the avidity with which Judy sweetened herself from the sugar-bowl. But being very much wearied, she let her go on preserving herself, though she felt somewhat amused at her way of making lemonade, she having, Sophy said, "sucked down all the lemons in the cupboard in the forenoon."

But before Judy's operations at the table were over, Cora had fallen asleep, and a picture of innocence she made, with her head drooping under its weight of curls, half supported by an arm and hand too delicate for its burden. Her lips were slightly parted, while her cheek flushed like an infant's. One of her morning flowers lay on her bosom, which her right hand clasped. Her father found her thus, and for a moment viewed her tenderly—then stooping over her, parted her hair on her forehead, and gently kissed her. He then closed the lattice, and told Judy "not to disturb Miss Cora, that she was very tired." The house was still, and not a sound was heard but the singing of the locusts near the window, and the murmuring of insects among the flowers, that sent in their odors while she slept. Old Sophy came once to the door to see if "all was to rights," and slipped over the sill like a cat, to put a gauze veil over her face, "to keep off the pesky flies," and then after looking over the table ornaments, and thumbing a few books, and "peeking" through the blinds to see if the chickens were in the flower-beds, she went out as slily and as still as she came in. But not so Judy, although Sophy had

dragged her twice by the back of her dress away from the parlor windows, she still persisted in running with Frisk back and forth on the piazza, until ordered off by the Colonel in such peremptory tones, that she much preferred the back side of the house, and the society of the cat.

Cora at length awoke, refreshed after a long slumber. She hastened to her chamber to dress for the evening. Her father liked to see her in white, so she selected her prettiest robe, and after decorating her hair with unusual taste, put on her virgin attire. Her recent repose had left her slightly pale, and somewhat pensive. Notwithstanding her morning's enjoyment, there was still some weight on her mind. She was not entirely happy. Cora was not given to indolent reveries; she was too full of action, there was too much aim in her pursuits to indulge in hours of idleness; but to-night she was more reflective than usual. Her heart condemned her for the concealment she had practised upon her father; but how could she excuse herself for treating with so little ceremony, a stranger whom she knew only as the son of a neighbor? She felt that she was doing wrong to deceive him, and determined before night, to tell him who had been her morning's companion. But the expected visitor came, and now it was too late. Mr. Clarendon manifested much delight to see Cora again, but she did not greet him with her old light-hearted manner. He observed her depression, but thought her so perfect in her languor, that he would hardly have changed her. The parlor was shaded where he found her sitting, and the light coming through the green lattice, gave a paler shade to her complexion.

Her bearing was graceful as usual, but quiet and dignified. He thought her dress exquisitely beautiful, making her look purer and more chastely elegant than he had ever seen her. Still he was piqued with her indifference. After conversing with him a short time, she left him, pleading fatigue to her father, and wishing him to excuse her for awhile. The Colonel repaired to the parlor, and Cora did not return until tea-time. The meal passed off pleasantly, notwithstanding Cora's languor, and everything conspired to make the Colonel happy. He had had a conversation with his friend, that put him into great spirits, and had been able that day to raise a loan which temporarily relieved him from some pecuniary trouble. His indebtedness was not less, but he felt it some relief to be able to

shift the obligation. Thus, from the weakest mismanagement, the Colonel lived in a state of perpetual slavery. He was anxious that his daughter should pay as much attention to his friend as himself, and regretted that she was indisposed. After tea, Cora felt in better spirits, and resolved as soon as Mr. Clarendon had gone, to tell her father of the acquaintance she had formed without his knowledge. A slight shower had fallen during the afternoon, and had left its diamond rain glittering on the trees and shrubs, which now shook with their dripping leaves.

A rainbow was seen across the sky, so vivid and brilliant that she went on to the steps of the balcony for a better view. There she stood, until it faded into the blue haze of coming night. The air was sweet, and troops of birds that had hatched their young, since Cora's childhood, in the old trees about the cottage, now sung merrily. She sat down on the steps, and watched the little songsters as they flitted among the wet branches.

Mr. Clarendon left the Colonel and joined her. He rallied her on her dejection, and asked her what she was thinking about, that made her so serious?"

"Oh, of nothing," replied Cora, "I was watching the little blue bird with yellow tips to his wings. I think he is an old acquaintance. If he is the same, I found him alone in his nest one day deserted, and took him away and fed him, until I tamed him. He would hop from my hand, and light on my finger, and shoulder. But one day I thought he wanted his freedom, and let him fly back to the woods. I have not seen him since then. That was last summer; but I am sure that that is little Tip, with his gold and blue feathers. Don't startle him! he's coming nearer—*hush!*" she whispered, "he is on the lilac bush! there! now close to me!"

Cora stood eagerly forward, almost breathless. She chirped to her old favorite, when, to her delight, he flew towards her, and lighted upon her outstretched finger. She drew him towards her, and laid her hand upon his pretty feathers caressingly, calling him "Tippy;" but when she attempted to feed him, with his disdain of captivity, he flew on to an elm branch near by, and after swelling his throat with a few sweet notes, winged himself away.

Cora was much excited, and ran to her father, and while she eagerly clasped his arm, said, "Oh! papa, little Tip has

been to see me." Her father smiled affectionately, and told her she was a "silly child." Cora then ran back to the steps, while she fixed her eyes on the branches.

"Do you think, Cora," said Mr. Clarendon, approaching her, "that you will always have this passion for birds and flowers?"

"Do you think it is weak for me to do so?" questioned Cora.

"Your love is too precious to be wasted unappreciated," said Mr. Clarendon.

"I believe that God meant to have us love all beautiful things," said Cora, "else birds and flowers wouldn't have been made so beautiful and sweet. Dear little things! they sometimes seem fit company for angels. How good they are too; when they first wake, their songs seem to go up to Heaven. I love to sometimes wake at early dawn, when they begin to twitter and sing. If, with their instinct, they involuntarily worship God, how strange it is that we don't love Him more."

"But, Cora, do you not think it mere imagination, that leads one to think they praise their Creator. I suppose they sing, as naturally as bees hum."

"Perhaps so, but God has given them sweeter music, and I love at least to think their early songs are morning orisons. Their songs are certainly praise, if unconscious music; for they exhibit God's glory, and so we may say of all nature's music. I think a little bird could be the means of making one a Christian."

"How, Cora?"

"By their innocent, joyous lives—there is nothing grovelling or gross about them; they seem a typification of holiness when they wing upwards, and never so happy as when they soar in the blue sky, just as we ought to find happiness, by elevating our hearts to Heaven. There is something in this hour, and the birds, that always makes me wish I was good. But I know you think I am silly, and it is strange that I talk so to you; but I suppose (Cora smiled), it is because you always seem such a good listener."

"Cora, you can never weary me. I could always listen to you. You are too good, I wish sometimes that you were less so, for you are a reproach to your friends."

"Don't say so, Mr. Clarendon. Oh, I have been distressed all day at something wrong that I have done."

Mr. Clarendon was delighted with Cora's confidential manner, and encouraged her to talk freely, and tell him anything.

"But you will think I have done wrong, too."

"Tell what naughty thing you could do," said Mr. Clarendon, playfully, while he seated himself on the step below Cora, and leaned his head against a pillar.

"Well, then, if I tell you, you must be a kind brother, and say if it was *really* wrong."

Mr. Clarendon watched Cora's little foot as she spoke, and as the tiny slipper tapped the seat near him, he saw that Cora spoke with feeling.

"I will," said he, "speak freely."

"Well, then, is it wrong to make an acquaintance accidentally, without an introduction, if we feel that they mean and act rightly?"

"It would not be in me, Cora, but perhaps—I think it is—imprudent for you. Why? have you done so?"

"Is it wrong, Mr. Clarendon?"

"What is imprudent is wrong, in a young lady. But you would not do so without your father's knowledge. He is, you know, very particular in his associates."

"But the persons that introduce us are not always so desirable as those they make us acquainted with."

"Now tell me, Cora, whose acquaintance you have formed clandestinely." Mr. Clarendon's manner was very earnest, and his eyes full of keen observation.

"Oh! I cannot tell you, Mr. Clarendon, but I mean to tell papa."

"Is this person a man or woman?"

"Oh! I cannot tell any one but papa," said Cora. "But I have been arguing the matter in my mind whether I did wrong. I know I have not done right not to tell my father who I walked with."

"Walked with! Miss Cora? He will disapprove of all this, I know, Cora. Tell me all about it, and I will guard you, and you will avoid his displeasure."

"But still I should deceive him."

The night had now become nearly dark, and as Cora and Mr. Clarendon talked, the latter drew nearer to his young companion. He addressed her in tones low and earnest, and begged her, if she regarded him as a friend, to place full confi-

dence in him, and that, if there was aught he could do for her, or her father, it should be done.

Ere Cora could reply, he threw his arm about her, and in whispered accents murmured, "Would, Cora, that I could guard you through life."

The blood rushed to the young girl's cheek and neck. She instinctively felt that there was more than the "father's friend" in the tones and the embrace, from which she sprung to her feet, trembling and alarmed. She attempted to go, but eager, earnest words, and an arm from which she could not flee, held her powerless.

"Cora, do you think," said Mr. Clarendon, "that all the flowers of Araby—the birds of heaven, could charm me while you were near them?"

"Oh, let me go," said Cora, breathlessly.

"Listen to me for one moment, and you shall. You call me ambitious, and so I am, for the world's honors and for wealth; but without a loving heart to rejoice in my success, and share my prosperity, I am poor, indeed. I am ambitious for more, for the love of your young heart. No, no, not yet." Mr. Clarendon now kissed the resisting fingers he held. "Could I win this little hand, I would sacrifice for it all the laurels that ever wreathed the brow of poet or patriot."

Cora could not speak, but she covered her eyes, and burst into tears.

"Have I offended you?" said Mr. Clarendon, gently.

"Oh, you have shocked me! Oh, spare your flattery for the fashionable world. I do not understand it. I thought you was my friend, and so I talked to you." Cora's words came in an agitated whisper.

"Your friend! Cora! Would I not be brother, friend and husband to you? You are young, but shall have all the tenderness that an idol could desire."

Cora's face had been hid in her hands, she now raised it, and in a low, imploring accent, said, "Don't distress me. I am but a little girl, and you terrify me by such language. Oh, no, no, no!"

"Cora, I will not wed an unwilling bride. Think of my proposal. You shall have a beautiful home."

"Oh, no. I have a dear home now."

"Cora, it need not be a city home. You shall have a bower as sweet as ever the sun shone upon in Eden. And

more than this. You shall see the skies of Italy, breathe the softest air of France, and love, idolatry, shall be your food."

"Oh! no, no, *no*," said the struggling girl.

"Be calm then—one kiss from your beautiful lips shall tell me all your tongue refuses."

The darkness of the hour revealed no indignant blushes, and the low, urgent entreaties of the lover were not spared for that reason; but a loud scream from Judy put a damper on the progress of his suit, while in vexation he listened to the following outcry:

"Miss Cory! Miss Cory! The rabbits are all out, and a fox is in the chicken-coop."

The release was not voluntary, but his nerves had had a shock that the wildest hopes of success could hardly have given him. He was ready to wring the necks of not only all the chickens, but Judy's along with them. Cora had suddenly vanished, and he felt almost as keenly as Judy did, "a fox was in the chicken-coop," and that the chicken had come off victor.

In the meantime Cora had sought her father. The latter had observed that his daughter was with Mr. Clarendon; and having noticed her previous reserve, was glad that she was more courteous, so he devoted himself to the evening papers, while they were conversing.

"Oh, papa," she murmured, as she leaned against her father's shoulder, "I am so unhappy."

"What is it, my child?"

"I cannot tell you now; but go to Mr. Clarendon, and do not ask me to come into the parlor again to-night. I will come down when he is gone."

"My daughter, you distress me. Are you ill?"

"No, no. I will tell you by-and-by."

"Well, my dear, if you wish, I will excuse you. Come to me before you retire." Cora's head was again pressed fondly to the breast of her parent. The Colonel then returned to Mr. Clarendon. He found him pacing the outer walk with rapid steps. His arms were folded, and he seemed not to observe the Colonel's approach. His host soon accosted him, and begged him to excuse his absenting himself so long. Mr. Clarendon made some irrelevant reply, and walked on. The Colonel then remarked upon the night, and of the last news reported. The replies of his guest were brief, and the Colonel

observed the change that had come over him since tea. He could not account for his mood, nor for that of Cora; and endeavored to rouse him from his reserve, but found him inaccessible and taciturn. A long pause ensued, while the gentlemen continued to manifest their fondness for the evening air and gravelled walks. It was at last broken by a remark from the Colonel, who thought "the night was becoming cooler," to which Mr. Clarendon assented by saying, "Yes, yes, very hot."

The Colonel, then, poked up the stones with his cane, and coughed, while he complained of a tendency to bronchitis, at which Mr. Clarendon said, "Ah!" And when the Colonel, furthermore, stated that "at times he felt like choking," his guest sympathetically observed "that it was very likely." But this state of things was brief. Mr. Clarendon had finally reached the crisis of his fever; whereupon a change occurred which brought light to the mind of the anxious Colonel.

"You find me absent-minded, perhaps, Colonel," said the former:

"Some."

"Well, Colonel, a few words will explain matters. Your daughter will, probably, tell you what I have this evening said to her, and you must already know that I have more than one object in visiting Villacora."

"Hem!" came from somewhere in the Colonel's windpipe.

"Well, sir, I wish to make no secret of my object. I wish to marry your daughter."

The Colonel stopped as short as if he had been shot, without any preparatory measures on his part. He was speechless and confounded. Mr. Clarendon, therefore, left him leaning against a tree, and walked on a few paces, when suddenly turning, he added—

"I have, doubtless, taken you by surprise, sir, but I hope not unpleasantly so. I have lived a bachelor long enough. Your daughter suits my taste, and an alliance with your family would be agreeable to me; may I hope for your influence with Miss Cora?"

The Colonel slightly choked, but finally muttered, "A child, Clarendon—a mere child—as ignorant of the world as a baby. Pardon me, but your scheme is wild—may I say it, sir, incomprehensible."

"By no means, Colonel; she is young but she will be

older. She is all I could desire in a wife. I would not hurry matters, but wish to be assured of your approbation."

"You have talked, then, with the child? She seemed disturbed—much so. How was she affected by the strange proposal? Pardon me! Very strange, Mr. Clarendon."

"We were interrupted, sir."

"By Judy? By Judy, doubtless. Troublesome servant. I will discharge her—too noisy—decidedly. The child was not acquiescent, I judge? Cora prefers not to leave me, of course: quite natural at her age. Glad to oblige you—feel flattered, but her youth is objectionable; wholly objectionable. Walk in, sir; take a glass of wine, sir. It must have been unpleasant—interrupted, too, by Judy. She would have declined, of course—of course. She likes, foolish child, other things better: has not thought of marrying yet."

"I will not annoy you further, Colonel, to night," said Mr. Clarendon—"it is a matter requiring consideration. A union of this kind would make your welfare mine. I could, then, efficiently aid you."

"Can't sell my daughter, sir. All right on your part, sir; but she thinks of other things—likes rabbits and birds—given up dolls, but still young—very young, Mr. Clarendon."

"You will consider the matter at your leisure, perhaps?"

"Not necessary, Mr. Clarendon. New York is the place for you; fashionable men must marry fine women—plenty of them, Mr. Clarendon. Quite right—quite proper you should marry—did so myself. I approve of it. Never thought of Cora for you. She must be surprised, sir—quite so. Come in, sir; come in."

The gentlemen had now reached the house, and walked into the parlor. The Colonel immediately approached the side-board, broke several glasses in his haste, but finally brought out some Madeira, and offered it to his guest.

Mr. Clarendon accepted a glass, and as the Colonel seemed bent on desultory conversation, indulged him much against his private wishes. The Colonel felt unpleasantly—was embarrassed, and yet desirous of pleasing. He wished that Cora had spent the day in the woods. She was there well off—only a "neighborhood boy" with her. He liked to have her pick flowers and strawberries, and she looked sweet always to him around the house—she always sung, too, every night. Mr. Clarendon was certainly beside himself, he thought—he never

knew him take too much—but it was possible, quite possible. So the Colonel thought it best to humor his friend, and that he might forget his strange proposal by morning.

They spent the rest of the evening talking over various matters, on which topics both became animated, particularly the Colonel. He never more urgently pressed his guest to repeat his visit, and even told him that Cora would come down, but he liked her "to go to bed early, it made girls grow faster."

Mr. Clarendon bowed assent, and thought it prudent to tuck a little; so after steering with as much policy as the circumstances admitted of, and seeing no chance of Cora's re-appearing, he bid the Colonel adieu. He heard Judy's voice yet at the chicken-coop, and thought that the Colonel had better teach her his "early to bed" maxims. The fox was certainly abroad that night, but the chickens were well cooped.

After his departure, Cora was summoned from her bed-chamber to which she had resorted, much disturbed. The words of Mr. Clarendon were deeply imprinted on her memory, and his meaning fully understood. Her life had hitherto been serene as an infant's dream. To-day her imagination had been ardently excited; in the morning she had been entirely happy—the scenes of the flowery wood were still on her fancy, but the close of the day had brought new, exciting and painful emotion. She longed for the hour to come to confess all to her father, and receive his sympathy and consolation. She felt that Judy had been her good angel, and saved her from deep mortification. At her father's call, she jumped from the seat where she had thrown herself, with her face hid in her hands, and was soon on his knee in his sitting-room.

"Mr. Clarendon has prepared me, my daughter," said the Colonel, "for your confession—he cannot be himself to-night—he proposed marriage, Cora, to you, my child!—never mind, never mind—I have arranged it, satisfactorily, quite so—he got over it, and promised to come again. I told him that you had gone to bed—good plan to retire early, at your age, my daughter. He agreed with me, and seemed quite pleased with my prudence. He is a sensible man, and needs a wife—I will help him look up one—he has been useful to me, and I respect him. Are you now quite over your flurry?"

"I am glad he has forgotten what he said," whispered Cora.

"What did he say?"

"Oh, I can't tell, papa, he was foolish, and it made me feel

so. I couldn't answer him ; but there is another thing that I must tell you ; it weighs heavily on my mind."

"What is it, Cora ? About Judy, a troublesome child ?"

"Oh, no, papa ; about my walk home. I was with"—

"One of the neighborhood boys, perfectly safe on the whole. I was alarmed at first ; but it was all right ; very good of him to come with you."

"But it was not a boy, papa, it was a gentleman."

"Very nice young man, doubtless ; lives near the wood !"

"He sports about the woods a good deal, and knows all the paths."

"Very good of him. Tell him to bring us some fish, I will buy it of him."

"But he don't sell fish, papa. He has just come from Europe."

"Just over, I suppose. Irish then—great many about—clever, I suppose ; and Goody knows him. Would he like a situation ?"

"He is not poor, and he is not Irish. He lives at The Park."

"The Park, Cora ! What have you to do with people from there ? I am shocked, distressed !"

"It was young Mr. Wilton, papa," said Cora, with trepidation.

"Where did you become acquainted with him, Cora ?"

"It happened somehow. I don't know exactly."

"A puppy, doubtless ! Never speak to him. You have done wrong, very wrong. I am displeased, highly so."

The Colonel pushed his daughter aside, and walked the room hurriedly.

"I hate the Wiltons," he continued, "root and branch. I wish you to scorn them, to spurn their notice. Will you remember this ?"

The Colonel now took hold of Cora's arm as he addressed her. Cora sunk weeping on a chair, while her father continued to harshly reprove her. Cora was deeply grieved ; but felt relieved that she had confessed the whole of her imprudence ; and after some relenting on her father's part, went sadly to her chamber.

Mr. Clarendon had, in the meanwhile, sought his home. He knew his estimation as a match in society, and defeat only roused his determination to succeed. He had been accustomed

from childhood to exercise sway over those around him ; and commenced life with an imperious will, and a spirit unyielding and domineering. His superior intellect commanded in his youth the respect of his seniors, and his rapid progress to eminence in his profession excited no surprise with those acquainted with his talents and ambition. The tones of his voice were clear and melodious, and his eloquence often thrilling in its power. He was a favorite with both sexes ; witty and courteous to his own, and flatteringly deferential to the other. His person was distinguished for its unaffected elegance, rather than beauty, though when animated with the enthusiasm which his subject inspired, there were few who awarded him not its meed.

He was in the zenith of his popularity ; but the native nobleness of his character was daily becoming obscured by the world's deceitful varnish, while he hid the sincerity of a naturally ingenuous nature beneath the gloss of worldly policy.

Talent, aided by intrigue, had secured him every advantage of position ; but the fever of excitement had begun to subside, and palled upon his senses. He had drunk of every Circean cup, from fashion's gilded saloon, to the court where Bacchus holds his gayest revels. Still, to the world, he was yet unstained by vice ; and the society of Louis Clarendon was courted by all in the circle in which he moved. The faults of his character were only known to those acquainted with his private history. Satiated with honors and pleasure, he now craved the possession of a fresh young heart, united with such qualifications as would adorn his home. He wished that a few more years had passed over the head of Cora Livingston ; but even with youth, he preferred her to any woman of his acquaintance. She was simple, yet refined ; beautiful without vanity, and amiable with spirit and character ; and more than all, the quiet elegance of manner so natural to her, fitted her, he believed, for the position. His last interview with her had not demolished his hopes. He knew that his proposal had startled her, and he feared that the sportsman of the wood had excited her fancy ; but he contrasted his practised powers of conquest, with the youth and inexperience of her young admirer, whoever he might be, and resolved yet to win her.

He had no fear of the Colonel's serious opposition after the first shock was over, and knew that his influence upon him was powerful and impressive.

Flora Islington was now but a dream on his imagination. No longer under the sway of her magical eyes, and the syren tones of her voice, he had almost dismissed her from his memory, and believed that he could now see her, unmoved, and even hear that she was wedded to another. Still his curiosity was often excited to know her fate, and to learn if she had ceased to love him. His sympathy was excited when he thought of her perhaps necessitous condition, and he yet hoped that she would apply to him for aid.

He knew that her education and mind fitted her for gaining a support, but also that she would have to contend with the indolent nature and luxurious habits of her early life.

He had often thought her incapable of exertion, but he only pictured her as he had there known her. He knew not the change that awaited her, and the dread sacrifice she made when she resigned his home and love.

With Mrs. Linden she struggled on for a year, endeavoring to school her heart to endure her sad destiny. She became, daily, more persuaded that the friend who had implanted in her breast the love of virtue, and had pointed out to her the road to heaven, had great and secret trials. She became alarmed with her long hours of seclusion, and distressed with her mysterious silence regarding her past history. She often felt that she was a burden to her, although Mrs. Linden reproached her for the confession, and the thought frequently crossed her mind that, but for her, this admirable woman might seek a life more congenial to her tastes than that which seemed but a cloister, in which her talents were hid from the world. But Flora had only to express such sentiments to receive tears and reproaches from the only being to whom she could cling with confidence. They read, worked, and sung together, while the sorrows of each were topics never alluded to. Flora's face grew daily pallid and more *spirituelle* in its loveliness, though her health was sufficient to support her in the exercise of her duties. Her voice grew more melting and subduing, and the melody of her song seemed to have caught the tones of a seraph. She repulsed all advances from the many admirers who became enamoured of her beauty, and preferred her books and solitude to any society. She had loved with all the fervor of an impassioned nature, and her heart could admit no second inmate. She assumed again the dress she had reluctantly resigned after the death of her mother, and was as mournful as

after that event. Still there was no want of action in her life ; like a beautiful nun she went among the poor and suffering, and soothed the couch of many a sorrowing heart. Like soft moonlight, she shed her rays on the bosom of the afflicted, and like starry night, she veiled herself and departed.

But on that night no sun ever dawned. She awoke in sadness, and laid down to rest in the depths of gloom. Mrs. Linden became alarmed with her continued depression, and her love of solitude, and encouraged her to seek some employment, hoping that actual exertion would restore her to cheerfulness. She often had great solicitude regarding the change she had been instrumental in producing in Flora's destiny, and prayed that she might in this world reap her reward for the sacrifice she had made. She felt that she acted conscientiously, and had advised Flora as she would have done a beloved child, and this was her only reward. But when she remembered the sparkling joyousness of the young girl that used to bound to her embrace, and that came with her warm, flushed cheek, and scarlet lips, from her interviews with her beloved guardian, she could not but sigh to look upon her now. And yet her conscience whispered, "Have I not saved her, perhaps, from deeper sorrow?" She knew now that Flora, instead of bestowing her whole heart upon an earthly idol, in her closet, before the altar of her God and Redeemer, bowed in saint-like humiliation.

One day, at the close of autumn, Mrs. Linden told Flora that she should be obliged to leave her, and perhaps be absent for a month. She urged her permission to provide a companion for her during her absence. But this the sad girl firmly declined, and said that she should be happier alone. The house they lived in was in an obscure part of the city, and as free from intrusion as if in the heart of a desert. Flora was generally fearless. It was society only that annoyed her. She wandered out towards evening, a few weeks after Mrs. Linden had left her, deeply shrouded, as was her wont, in black, and mechanically threaded many streets without apparent end or purpose. She seemed like one lost, and finally became herself bewildered. She was in the business part of the city, and lifted her veil for a moment to look about her and ascertain her location. As she did so, Mr. Clarendon, who was returning home, caught a view of her well-known features.

From the loss of her bloom, he was at first startled and uncertain ; her dress, too, was almost a disguise. She did not observe him, and with agitated steps, he followed her. It was growing dark, and he felt that his presence was now a protection to one he had vowed for ever to guard. At a short distance he kept pace with the beautiful vision, that a second glance assured him was Flora. As she hurried onward, evidently alarmed, he determined to see her safely to her abode, wherever it might be. Thus secretly did Louis Clarendon follow the steps of one he had once fondly and passionately loved. Her veil was now dropped, and the nun-like Flora hastened on with light and fleet steps ; but she was seen also by another, who followed her more closely, and whom Mr. Clarendon observed she avoided with terror. Her pursuer finally came to her side, and addressed her.

Flora darted like a wild fawn in another direction, but was still followed by him. Mr. Clarendon had now overtaken both, and with a powerful blow thrust from off the pavement her insulter, and by the side of Flora still wended his way.

The latter did not dare look up. She had seen the man levelled by one whom she did not observe ; and as Mr. Clarendon did not speak, he was not recognized by the terrified girl. Her door was at length reached, when she fleetly ascended the steps of her lonely home. It was dark, and the street was dimly lighted.

He came to her side, and whispered, "Flora !" She turned and felt the presence of her worshiped guardian.

"Speak to me once," he said, as she caught the railing for her support ; "tell me that you do not suffer. I have protected you home. For God's sake, let me assist you, you must be poor, in this dismal place."

He caught the hand that was raised to open the door, and held it in both his own. In that moment, both felt to suffocation, the agitation of the interview.

"Oh, no !" murmured Flora, "may God bless you for all you have done—for your service to-night. Oh, I thought never again to meet you. Go now, for I am alone."

"Alone ! dear one ; where is your friend ?"

"I know not ; she sometimes leaves me—good bye !" the tones of Flora sunk like lead into the heart of her old guardian.

"Won't you let me help you, Flora? Oh, afford me this comfort," he still urged.

"Oh, no!" whispered the breathless girl; "I do not need much, and God will protect the orphan. Let me give you something—my farewell gift. Read it, if you ever loved me."

Flora slipped into the hand of her guardian, a small Bible, and released the hand he clasped convulsively. The door closed upon Mr. Clarendon, and he was left to return home.

CHAPTER XII.

*"A little nonsense now and then
Is relished by the best of men."*

TO Rufus Wilton, life had recently worn a new aspect. He had grown up without the softening effect of woman's influence, and by association and education stood in danger of becoming selfish and callous. Nature had made him refined and affectionate; but without sympathy at home, and living a life of purely personal gratification, if he had generous impulses, as yet they had no channel in which to flow.

The liberality of an absent uncle compensated for the parsimony of his father; his generous remittances supplying him with every luxury and convenience. But the extravagance of the young man was chiefly exhibited in his passion for books. He was fond of literature, but as yet had applied himself to no profession, and being naturally liberal, lavishly bestowed his money without purpose or profit. But he was not without his projects. While lying upon the grass, waiting apparently with undying eagerness for the bite of a fish, his mind was roving in another region. Filled, as it was, with lofty aspirations, he was far from being satisfied with his useless life. The fate of his mother so much absorbed his thoughts, that he became often visionary with his hopes and fears. He was sometimes sanguine that he should yet find, and make her happy; then his heart was agonized with the

certainty of his belief, that she had died neglected and broken-hearted.

But Rufus Wilton had of late woke to a more flowery existence, with sweeter, and more healthful influences. His admiration and heartfelt preference for Cora Livingston, had been evinced in their occasional interviews, though he had dared to express no more, or to ask a return—still he felt that a chain of sympathy united them.

He had never met her father ; he knew that there was some difficulty between his own and the Colonel, but having been for years from home, he had not learned the cause of their enmity, and knew little of its rancor. The sternness of his parent towards himself, forbade any confidence between them. He had sometimes alluded to his mother in his presence, but as it evidently excited his displeasure, he now never approached the subject, or conversed on any matter with him of deeper interest than the daily routine of common events.

On his return from old Goody's cottage, where he went for his horse after his walk home with Cora, with a light heart and bounding steed, he entered the avenue of his home. The tall trees arching over his head, had never appeared to him so magnificent, nor their sweeping boughs so graceful and beautiful, as they now seemed waving a welcome in the breeze. His eye wandered down far among the willows, and fell upon the monuments over the dead. For the first time he thought with interest on the names there inscribed ; hitherto they had been only associated with the reckless sports of his childhood, when he had there resorted to roll his marbles, or play at hide and seek, among the neglected grave-stones. Now they possessed new sanctity in his eyes, and were respected as covering the ashes of the departed, and those, the ancestors of Cora Livingston. For the first time, he thought intently upon the enmity between their parents, and resolved to look into the case more fully.

As he dismounted at the gate, he saw, sitting at the parlor window, his uncle Peter, in company with the daughter of a neighbor, Miss Sally Sapp. Captain Sam Sapp sat at the other, conversing with his father.

As the son and nephew entered the room, uncle Peter exclaimed, " Well, young foreigner, we have an unexpected pleasure for you. Miss Sally has been entertaining me very

nicely, but I know she would like a young beau better ; and, having a negotiation to make with the Captain, I will consign her to you."

To say that Miss Sally was interesting, would be a slander upon her sex, but that she excited the aversion of any one, would also do her injustice, for she was not one to inspire so exciting a sentiment. No one could look into her round, good-natured countenance, out of which shone a pair of eyes like whortleberries in milk, without being forced, out of sympathy, to laugh with her gleesome face, though her hilarity was as joyously excited by the feats of her pet spaniels, one of which lay in her lap, as at the merriest farce ever enacted ; and her sensibility amused as effectively by the screech of a Guinea fowl, as with the most thrilling strains of music.

Her form was short and dumpy, with little plump hands, covered with jewels.

At the address of uncle Peter, Rufus' first impulse was to escape the awkward raillery he was confident would ensue ; but his situation forbade a retreat, and he philosophically resigned himself to it. Uncle Peter was delighted with the success of his manœuvre, for which he gave himself great credit ; for what so likely, thought he, to bring about a match as to "get the young people together."

With an air of satisfaction he drew himself up, thrusting his hands into a pair of ample pockets, and stood before the "young couple" which he had mated, to hear what they had to say ; but finding that Miss Sally did little else but play with her finger-rings, and his nephew pull the ears of her lap-dog, which he had drawn into his own lap, he concluded that "he'd be moving," while he silently marvelled that such a small specimen of an animal could take his attention from what he called the handsomest girl in the country ; he only wished that he was younger.

Rufus found Miss Sally much easier to entertain than he had fancied. Still he was provoked with his uncle for his officiousness, and determined to repay him before night. He had only to stand Snip on his hind-legs, and make him "bark Spanish," to stroke his silken ears, and admire his glittering collar, to bring all the smiles to her cheek that a Cuban ever wore. But of this amusement, he soon wearied, when he restored the pet to his mistress, into whose lap he curled, as if

he had no doubt of his title to possession. Wilton was glad that Cora kept no lapdog.

Frisk had none of Snip's effeminacy. He was a dog that stood on his own legs ; tail and ears up, and ran before and after Cora in a manner entirely independent. He was also a dog that asked no favors, but seemed much more gratified to confer them ; and old Goody never made a more calumnious insinuation than when she hinted that Frisk might have put his nose in her basket. He also despised wine and cake, which Snip chiefly lived on ; in short, Snip and Frisk were different dogs, and Rufus Wilton held them in very different estimation. But Snip was so much a part of Miss Sally Sapp that he could not expel him from his presence as unceremoniously as he felt inclined to do, when he put his pug nose in his glass of wine.

"He won't drink it," said Miss Sally, apologetically. "He likes sherry cobblers best. He only wants to know whether it is Port or Madeira."

Wilton felt much inclined to give him a taste of a mud-puddle ; but had the prudence not to express his sentiments. His patience becoming wearied with his insipid company, he asked Miss Sally if she liked flowers, and as she answered in the affirmative, he proposed going to the green-house ; first informing Miss Sapp that the sun was too hot for her to accompany him ; and as Snip had just composed himself for a nap, it was inconvenient for her to rise until he awoke—so circumstances favored her gallant companion.

After a long absence, he returned with a bunch of flowers not deficient in quantity.

Rufus had forgotten his errand after his escape, and after a long ramble, and a conversation with the gardener, he remembered his ostensible errand. The green-house was at a distance, and as he was wearied, he dispatched a servant for the bouquet. The boy returned with a variety, such as had pleased him, among which snap-dragons and four o'clocks abounded.

Wilton looked at the collection equivocally. However, he did not know Miss Sally's taste, and ventured to present them with a dubious smile. She expressed herself, much to his satisfaction, greatly pleased with them, declaring that "snap-dragons were her delight," and immediately evinced her appreciation of the "live for ever" mixed up with them, by laying the leaves separately upon her tongue, and blowing up the silken partition

that forms its inner coating—thus affording her entertainment until dinner.

After the meal was over, Uncle Peter, who had watched the presentation of the flowers, and Miss Sally's good-natured smile, which he grew more enamored with, now proposed that Rufus should give her a drive after his ponies. The nephew unconsciously grew red with vexation, at the proposition, but as it was made in presence of the lady, he could only bow assent. Miss Sally satisfactorily acquiesced, though she feared that "Snip was getting ill, he seemed so languid."

Uncle Peter, who was always ready to "oblige young people," proposed bringing round the vehicle himself—his nephew, meanwhile, assisting the lady in enveloping her person with a shawl, while he discussed his uncle's amiable qualities, which he said were particularly exhibited in his gallantry to ladies.

The carriage finally came to the door, when Rufus begged his uncle to remain seated, and to hold Snip until he helped in Miss Sapp, which Uncle Peter most obligingly did, keeping meanwhile the reins. The dog had eaten too much brandy peach with dinner, and gave symptoms of illness, which much disturbed Miss Sally, and grew alarming to Uncle Peter, who held him upon his lap; but the lady being now seated, he made manifestations of transferring the afflicted animal to his nephew, and also his seat, while he held out the reins to him, but the obliging young gentleman had retreated, while he exclaimed :

"Keep your seat, uncle, I beg of you—can't think of depriving you of the pleasure."

"But, Rufe!" loudly exclaimed Uncle Peter.

"No thanks, uncle," cried Wilton, with a gallant wave of the hand—"Will get ahead of you next time."

"But my engagements, Rufe," shouted the uncle.

But "Rufe" was in the distance while sounds were coming indistinctly on his ear, which much resembled vociferations relating to business.

The nephew did not reply, but inwardly hoped that for the future his worthy relative would attend to it when he had nothing more important to do.

The result of his uncle's unexpected drive with a lady, which he was afraid rumor might "get around," and subject him to suspicions, embarrassing to a "bachelor of his age," his nephew had no curiosity to ascertain; but he had the satisfaction, towards evening, of seeing his uncle alight safely with Miss Sally,

at her father's residence, though the redness of his face increased to vermilion when he perceived that a number of his acquaintances were awaiting his return, and that he was compelled, after helping out his companion, to return for the dog, which he brought out by his hind legs, stiff in a fit! Miss Sally's face was colorless with fright for her favorite; a tableau which Rufus enjoyed at a distance, feeling it, however, prudent to withhold his sympathy.

CHAPTER XIII.

The cold in clime, are cold in blood;
Their love can scarce deserve the name;
But mine was like the lava flood
That boils in Etna's breast of flame.

BYRON.

THE same evening, after Mr. Clarendon's interview with Flora, on the steps of her humble home, he resorted to the house of a lady where he had been invited to attend a brilliant *fête*. As he entered the festive saloon, music greeted him with her syren voice, and gladsome smiles from the gay and beautiful came dazzling on his vision. The contrast to Flora's tones—her mournful dark eyes—was like that of a funeral dirge, its hearse and plumes, to the merriest band of inspiring music.

He had already steeped his senses in wine, endeavoring, as he quaffed the goblet, to forget the sad, nun-like vision. After chatting familiarly with his hostess, he was accosted, jocularly, by a gentleman, on his late indifference to society, which he said could in no way be better accounted for than in the absorbing interest which he had recently taken in the Livingston and Wilton case. "They say," said Mr. Rodney, "that the little Villacora beauty is the attraction to you, up the Hudson. Miss Livingston, of — Place, tells me that she shall send for her to come to town this winter. We hear that she is a little Venus."

"Miss Cora Livingston, Mr. Rodney," replied Mr. Clarendon, "is not such a little beauty. She is of medium height. I

know little of her plans. I have been much occupied with some business of the Colonel, which has carried me often to his place. However, I do not deny my admiration of his daughter. But I believe this is not the first time that rumor has assigned me a wife."

"By no means! But the most absurd report was, that you were going to marry that dark-eyed singer that you were so romantic as to adopt, educate, and then secrete somewhere, out of the sight of the scores of admirers that she had enslaved with her mysterious beauty, which the great difficulty of getting a glimpse of, made the more fascinating. Pray where is she, Clarendon? You are like the dog in the manger, in your management of her."

Mr. Clarendon laughed slightly, and denied the accusation, saying, "That Miss Islington had gone to her friends, and that he had known little of her of late." Then hastily turning the subject, he inquired "who was that richly dressed lady sitting in the distance, eyeing him through a glass?"

"She has certainly her eye on you, Clarendon," said Mr. Rodney; "but you will have to *parlez vous* in her dear delightful tongue, or stand no chance of securing her smiles."

"Who's the portly gentleman, near by?"

"That is, by courtesy, her husband. He is as quiet as an old mastiff; makes it a point to dislike what madame adores; hates dancing; despises parties, and but for the supper, would, I suppose, have absented himself entirely. They have just arrived, or she would not be so *outré* as to be seen with him to-night. He is now retreating, and wishing himself I'll be bound, on an East India cruise. Come forward, and I'll present you."

"*Oui, Monsieur,*" said Mr. Clarendon, good-humoredly, glad of any excitement to divert his thoughts.

The approach of Mr. Clarendon towards Madame Delano, gave occasion for the exhibition of new graces on the part of the Frenchified belle, who hailed the acquaintance of one so distinguished and popular with delight, as affording her a new and exciting field for the display of her coquettish charms, and with the novelty and amusement she afforded him, Mr. Clarendon banished Flora from his mind—a vision dispelled by an affected devotee to fashion—a butterfly made seemingly to bask in the sunshine of society, one not capable of conversation, but who could, with a grace peculiarly her own, toss over

the airy nothings that float on the surface of gay assemblies, pleasing and bewildering for the moment, but forgotten with the last brush of her glittering wings. She was, however, sufficiently fascinating to keep him at her side most of the evening. Until near morning he lingered in the gay assemblage, and, ere he sought his rest, had drank the deepest draughts from pleasure's bowl. As feverish dreams disturbed his slumber, the eyes of his once-loving Flora were fixed upon him, and when the sweet, young face of Cora appeared to chase away the phantom, it wore a cold, reproachful look.

The rays of the morning sun, long excluded, came struggling through the window-shades of his apartment—they fell upon a picture of himself, when a boy. The countenance of the youth was ingenuous and noble, and feeling and intellect beamed forth from the child's young face. He was standing by the side of his mother, dressed in a loose sack of purple velvet, with white trowsers, while his collar lay open widely on the neck, covered with flowing dark hair.

Decision and manliness already showed itself in the curled lip and eye of fire, as upon his parent he gazed affectionately. She was represented as a tall, dignified woman, with beauty of countenance and sweetness of expression, and looked upon her son with an eye of doting affection. As Louis Clarendon contemplated the picture, he contrasted himself with the boy as he stood, the image of nobleness and truth. He shut his eyes and looked within. What did he there find, but duplicity, selfishness and worldly ambition, for which he would sacrifice the dearest object of his love. With cunning sophistry, he soothed a conscience by no means dead, a heart's compunctions, not callous or unsusceptible. He looked within, and believed that Cora Livingston was sent him by Heaven as his guardian angel, to restore him to purity and peace of conscience. He consoled himself for his heartless course towards Flora, by the thought that as his wife he could never make her happy, with her peculiar tastes and foreign characteristics. He thought of her passionate, vehement nature, which, from a child, had been governed by a strong will, and wild impulses; of the brilliancy of her eye, of her flashing color, which in health and happiness had made her cheek so radiant, and how easily revulsion of feeling, with his exacting self-indulgent nature, might change into the whirlwind and tempest the spirit now so calm and unruffled. That

he still loved her, his quickening pulse, and fervid emotion told him, and he felt the sacrifice that he made when he resigned the thought of her as his wife. He contrasted her with the fair child-like Cora, with her gentle nature, and sweet dignity, that made her in society an object of pride as well as love. He was aggravated and excited by Flora's rejection of his favors, and of the indifference with which she shunned him, voluntarily suffering sacrifice and privation, rather than be indebted to one who had supported her from childhood, and who had vowed to her dying mother to be her guardian and guide. Thus did the credulous sophist cheat himself into the belief that he was acting wisely and nobly.

Flora had shut the door upon her guardian, and in violent emotion, thrown herself upon her bed, to grieve alone. Through a sleepless night she tossed in anguish of spirit.

That hour with her guardian had worked in her a change. She had heard again the voice that had been her life, had seen the glance of an eye, that even in the starlight she felt like fire coursing through her veins ; and felt the pressure of a hand whose touch was yet magical. Her good resolutions deserted her, and in passionate emotion she clung to her old love, and abandoned herself to his guidance. While under the maddening conflict, Mrs. Linden returned.

In the vehemence of her feelings, Flora came to her friend, and throwing herself beside her, said, " Don't welcome me, don't kiss me, hate me if you will ; but I am going *home, home* ; where I have been happy, where the rose will come back to my cheek, and love awaits me. I have seen *him*, and he loves me still. I spurned his offers of kindness, but it nearly broke my heart ; and now, if I peril my soul, I am going back to my guardian."

" Flora, my child," said Mrs. Linden, " you are ill, your face is as colorless as marble, your lips are white, and your hands tremble. What has happened ? Let me soothe you. Come to me, my poor stricken one."

Flora's head fell on the knees of her friend, while she parted her hair, and bathed her throbbing temples. For a while the pale girl seemed passive. Mrs. Linden rubbed her cold hands, and offered her a cordial, which she hoped would restore her to composure and reason. But Flora soon rose, and while she retreated from her friend, said :

" Why would you have me die ?"

"Flora, my child," answered Mrs. Linden, "the spirit of evil is wrestling with you. Go to your closet, and on your knees, before the God you profess to love, pray that it may pass from you, and that He will leave you in the possession of that 'peace which passeth all understanding.' Flora, God will not permit this insanity to govern you. He will not withhold his Holy Spirit, for you have given yourself to Him, and he holds you yet in the 'hollow of His hand.' Remember that you have the power to resist wrong, and to cling to the anchor that will be your safety in life and your hope in death. Flora, where have you seen him?"

"Last night. I cannot listen to you—cast me off—I am going." While Mrs. Linden held the hand of the infatuated girl with a firm grasp, Flora wrested it from her, and fled to her chamber.

Mrs. Linden went to her own, and there prayed fervently for protection and guidance in behalf of the orphan child of her adoption. An hour after, with streaming eyes and tones of love, she sought Flora.

When she entered the room where she supposed her still to be, consternation filled her soul. The wretched girl had fled!

With hasty steps she had sought her apartment, arrayed herself in her deep black dress, and glided softly down the staircase. She saw Mrs. Linden on her knees, weeping and praying for her. She covered her eyes, and dropping her thick veil, passed quickly out. After a long walk she found herself at the door of her guardian's house. She thought that at this hour he was absent; and that in her dress she could gain admittance unknown. But she was mistaken. The moment that Benson had caught a view of her hair and eyes, she recognized the ward of her master, who had more than a year since fled. But to her low inquiry for him, she said nothing; her curiosity was excited, and she allowed her to pass in. Flora then went softly, and with a trembling step, to the library. There lay Sappho by his master's table, and all things beautiful and luxurious as she had left them. The dog knew her, and jumped upon her while he licked the hand that caressed him. She hugged him about the neck, and cried passionately. She looked all about the room. She opened the books her guardian had been reading; and looked at the flowers that she had loved and left. She threw off her bonnet and approached the mirror that once reflected her dazzling beauty. She saw that she was changed,

and her face as colorless as marble ; but believed if had loved as she had done, it would not affect him. She watched the clock, and knew that he must soon come. With breathless suspense she listened ! Her heart stood still, then beat as if it would burst its prison. A burning flush had now arisen where but recently her cheek was deadly pale. The fever of excitement had made her lips like threads of scarlet, and her eyes lustrous as burning coals. She hears him coming—he enters the adjoining parlor. He is wearied, and throws himself upon a sofa. Sappho bounds to meet him ; but he does not regard him. His eyes are on a letter. It was from Colonel Livingston. He reads part of it aloud. Flora listens. She cannot run to meet him, her feet are paralyzed. He must, he will seek her in the library, where they had so often sat.

From the old sofa, her favorite seat, she gazes on her idol—she feasts her eyes on his brow, his form, and with clasped hands sinks motionless. While she looked, he drew for the first time from his pocket, the little gift which she had given him the previous night—her Bible !—the sacred book that she had loved for its holy truths. He whom she loved so idolatrously, so wickedly (for she now felt that for him she was casting out her God and Saviour), had opened the holy page, and she had come to dash it from his hand, and abandon herself to his love, regardless of her soul's welfare or his. She saw him turn over the book—look at the cover—at the title-page, and there read her name—and then aloud the passages which she had marked :

“ Come unto me,” he read in a low voice, “ all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He then laid the book over his eyes, and Flora knew not whether his repose was that of sleep or prayer. *She* knew not, and guardian angels were about her. Mrs. Linden's prayer of faith was answered. Stealthily, penitently, she passed through the hall, while he remained quiet, and opened the outer door, and proceeded back to her weeping, distracted friend ; wearied and haggard she appeared before her, and clasping her knees cried, “ God has been my deliverer—I am again his own—I have seen *him*, but he has not known of my weakness—God only knows how deeply I have erred. Will He forgive me ?” she cried with streaming eyes.

Mrs. Linden held the weeping, penitent girl long and silently

to her heart, and then bade her pray for forgiveness and go to her rest. The great struggle was over, and Flora awoke the following morning with serenity and peace beaming on her face. The storm had passed over, and left her unscathed.

From an adjoining room, Benson had seen Flora; her keen eyes had watched her movements, and with satisfaction she saw her depart. She determined to keep her secret.

CHAPTER XIV.

How changed since last her speaking eye
Glanced gladness round the glittering room.

BYRON.

AFTER Cora's interview with her father, having relieved her mind of its burden respecting her accidental acquaintance with young Wilton, and also having told him of Mr. Clarendon's proposal, she laid her head on her pillow peacefully, notwithstanding her father's displeasure. She did not realize the depth of his animosity towards the Wilton family. As a flower opens its fresh petals to the sun, so she unclosed her violet eyes to look forth upon a joyous summer morning. Her sleep had been sweet and dreamless, and the dimples nestling in her cheeks as ready for play as ever. She first saw a little withered bud upon her toilet table, which the tenderest care could no longer preserve. It brought a girl's soft sigh from her breast, breathing little sadness. Her toilette was slowly performed, while she lifted the veil from her heart, and dwelt upon the sweet memories there treasured, and but for her mirror suddenly reflecting her unnarrayed beauty, she might have idled away another hour of sunlight, all occasioned by a little crumbling flower, which would soon be dust. Cora was often negligent in housekeeping matters, and sometimes forgot that Judy was busier below in mischief than in the performance of her duty, while she was either sleeping, or dreaming wide awake. But this morning she was more tardy than usual, notwithstanding her "little help" had twice told her that "breakfast was ready;" an announcement for which the odor of coffee, long inhaled, had prepared her. Old Goody had, also,

been up to see her, and brought her a bunch of feather-few and sweet marjoram. While she was dressing, she often wondered why her father did not like her young friend better, for certainly he seemed to her very pleasant, and very kind. She finally concluded that his dislike all arose from not knowing him; and with this reflection she tripped down to breakfast.

She found that the Colonel had not waited for her, and was preparing for a horseback ride. The animal he was intending to mount stood pawing the turf in front of the cottage. She came out to see her father ride off, and was somewhat alarmed when she saw a manifestation of rebellion on the part of the horse to the saddle, to which he was unaccustomed, as he was exhibiting fearfully his wild propensities. Cora anxiously watched the contest between him and his new charger, which reared and seemed to disdain both saddle and rider. She begged her father to dismount, but the Colonel persevered in the struggle, and finally settled his restive steed into a canter, when he rode off the grounds with satisfaction.

Cora then went in to her breakfast, which meal was enlivened by many remarks of Judy's respecting the horse's "scary ears and his kicking ups;" which dissertation digressed to the risky state of the hen-coops, where the foxes and coons got in every night, unless Sophy and her negro friends had night suppers on the chickens. This she thought as likely as not, and was *sure* one morning she saw bones around the kitchen. To all this Cora listened with an unconcerned ear, which Judy took for listening, so she went on till she came to the narrative of the cat's extensive family, she having found seven blind-eyed kittens that morning in the barn. But even to this announcement Cora did not wake up, for she felt much worried about the ugly horse which her father had ridden. Vicious he was, she believed, for Jamie had told her so the day before, and now she had seen his dreadful capers, of which Judy talked. But her father was now out of sight, and she could only remain waiting patiently for his return; so in the meantime she busied herself about the house, taking care always to ask every one she met, either in the kitchen or on the grounds, if they thought "Jerry" was safe; and as all that saw her anxious face told her there was no cause for alarm, she dismissed her fears, and commenced counting up the silver, while Judy sung "Blue-eyed Mary" through her nose, being *busy* putting away the sugar-bowl. The "little help," finally overburdened with thought,

told Cora that "there was a young man went by the gate that morning that looked in."

"Very innocent amusement," said Cora, smiling.

"But he looked when he went back, too," said Judy.

"How happened you to see him?" said Cora, while she wiped the salt-spoons, and patted down the salt with the bowl of one of them.

"Oh! I was swinging on the gate seeing Bill Jenkins catch his pig, and laughing to see the critter run the t'other way, when I see the young man go by. He had a heap o' hair and a cap on, and he sorter held his head up like our old gobbler, when he feels big. But he didn't seem proud either; he shook hands with Goody, and kinder nodded to me. I had a notion to ask him in, but thought as your pa hadn't shaved, and you wasn't up, he wouldn't care to see me and Sophy—besides my apron was ragged."

"Judy, you shouldn't be swinging on the gate so early in the morning, nor indeed at any time," said Cora. "Where was this gentleman going?"

"Oh, a birdin', I guess, he had some snipe, I believe, in his pocket. I dodged when I see his gun; this made him laugh. He's got queer eyes, ain't he? They look straight into you."

"Judy, you mustn't talk so much; make haste and come away from that cupboard. You've been there ten minutes."

"I was only pickin' over the berries, and sugaring 'em. Now I'll put somethin' over 'em to keep the flies out. How your pa hates flies! They is disagreeable, 'specially in 'lasses—I'll warrant they won't get into these berries."

"I think, Judy, if you was to shut the cupboard door, you would be more likely to keep out the flies, than standing there so long over them, with the open sugar-bowl," said Cora.

"Likely," said Judy; "Now shan't I fix the cake for tea?"

"No," said Cora, "I don't wish it cut in the morning. Go and help Sophy."

"I'd a heap rather help you. Niggers is queer, and kind o' ordering. They likes chickens and sweet things, don't they, Miss Cora?"

The "little help" now rolled up her great brown eyes, and drew down her mouth as far from her nose as was convenient, while she smoothed her hands over her linen apron.

"Come, then, if you want to help me," said Cora, "go and wash your hands, and you and I will stone these raisins."

This was just the business Judy liked, she having an expectitious way of conveying anything to her mouth, without seeming to retard her progress in work. So the "little help" flew, like a Shanghai fowl, out of the room; her dress being short, making the resemblance in the legs especially observable; and being soon made ready for the stoning occupation, sat down with her young mistress, dish and penknife in hand.

Judy, Cora found to be a diligent hand at her business, though fewer raisins piled up in the dish than seemed consistent with her dexterity. Judy, too, talked as fast as she worked, and while performing her sleight-of-hand tricks with the raisins, observed, "that the gentleman seemed kinder skairt last night, when she told him about the fox." She said it made her laugh when she bust on to the piazza, to see him straighten up."

"Hush, Judy, and attend to your work," said Cora, her cheek reddening.

"Ain't you kinder warm, Miss Cory?"

"No—what do you do with the stones, Judy?"

"I eats 'em. He kinder likes you, I guess—that city man," said Judy, filling her mouth.

"What makes you think anything so foolish, Judy?"

"I knows what I sees, Miss Cory. I ain't *green*. But I don't think he likes me. He thinks I'm foxy, he! he! Well, the raisins is done. Shan't I put 'em in the cupboard—out of the flies?"

Cora thought the dish held a scanty portion after they were stoned, and that they dwindled away some. But she told Judy that she might put them in the cupboard, and hurry out, for Sophy must want her.

So Judy raised the dish of raisins carefully, carrying her Shanghai extremities over the carpet, at what might be called "magnificent distances," and as it took her a long while to reach the top shelf, "out of the ants," she, of course, did not reappear soon; and when she did, she was for some time silent, owing to a sudden swelling of her tonsils.

But while Cora and Judy are busy about the cake, we will follow the Colonel on his ride. It was a morning made for the exercise; the air was clear and sunny, and the country fresh,

green and beautiful. As he passed the grounds of the Park, the remembrance of his wrongs, as he esteemed them, came through his mind, and embittered his feelings, while he looked with a yearning spirit towards the home of his boyhood. He also thought of Cora's meeting with the son of Wilton; and feared that the intercourse might ripen into dangerous intimacy, and resolved to restrict her rambling. So his thoughts ran, while his horse cantered pleasantly onward, only manifesting a fancy for shying when startled by a view of any unusual object. As the Colonel was anxious to give his new horse a fair trial, he turned into a sequestered path, off from the main road, where he thought he could accustom him to the bit and saddle, which was new to him. Rufus Wilton had left his home for the same agreeable exercise, and sought the same path, in the rear of the Colonel. To each other they were strangers, having never met since the latter had grown to manhood. His walk with Cora had filled his head with anxiety again to meet her, and he had been out early, gunning, hoping to see her somewhere in the neighborhood. But Judy was the nearest resemblance to her that he met about the premises, and she seeming to him to be precariously situated, with one leg on the fence, and the other in the swinging chain, he feared some impending catastrophe; but while he looked anxiously over the fence for Cora, and on it and the chain at Judy, the latter nodded to him so familiarly, he was forced to reciprocate the civility. He felt that he could not uninvited visit Villacora; and that the existing coolness between their parents made it awkward to do so, not that the quarrels of the "old folks" were of any more consequence to him, otherwise than the undying controversy and colloquy that seemed ever to exist between the dog at the Park, and the lordly feeling Frisk, who always seemed to bark for the honor of the family.

The Colonel had penetrated the woods through a narrow opening, where he found shade and a bridle-path, and opportunity to exercise his gay mettled steed, without any fear of his taking fright. Rufus Wilton rode more leisurely, sometimes looking at the stately figure in advance of him, and then at the antic movements of the horse he rode, quietly revolving in his mind a comparison between the two, which by no means seemed harmonious in his estimation. Then a black and white feathered bob-o-link over his head would attract his attention,

musically flew to his nest in the boughs beneath which he rode, while blue-birds twittered noisily, and the woodpecker kept up his hammering near by. He was, however, more occupied with his own thoughts, than with feats of horsemanship or with nature's beauties. He had given free rein to his fancy, which carried him into depths more profound than the forests of a wilderness—into the wilder, more mysterious paths of a Utopian world—under the exhilarating influence of his exercise, and the remembrance of his last interview with Cora on his memory. It is true that there was beauty in the foliage before unseen, sweeter melody in the music of the morning birds, new glory in the sky's blue depths that imaged his boundless hopes ; still a paradise of dreamy delight dwelt more richly on his imagination, than Eden untenanted by woman could have presented. He was in a brighter sphere than poet e'er pictured, sunnier than painter e'er pencilled, more flowery than Cashmere's rosiest vale—for he had entered the portals of beautiful dream-land.

He was soon startled from his musings by the rapid flight of the animal ahead of him ; and being fond of gay horses himself, was somewhat excited by the view, wishing that he had the fractious beast under his own management. He saw that the equestrian was unequal to the task, and involuntarily spurred Charlie on to the pursuit. He had seen a cow jump from a thicket as the rider passed it, and from the accelerated speed of the animal, as he dashed headlong with his burden, Wilton knew that the gentleman must be in imminent danger. He therefore pressed forward, hoping at least to render him assistance if required. He knew that they were both several miles from any habitation, and that perhaps he would be seriously hurt, if thrown. He had not proceeded far before he met the frightened steed, with his saddle hanging loose, his ears pricked up, with distended nostrils, running at full speed towards home.

He was then convinced that his rider had been thrown, and went rapidly forward. He soon found the fallen man, who lay bleeding and senseless upon the grass. He dismounted and hastened to his side. He thought that, though stunned, there was yet life ; and dragging him to a mound, he put under his head his own coat, which he took off for the purpose. There was a brook near by, and filling his hat he dashed it over the face of the fallen man. He opened a vein with his

penknife, which caused the sufferer to revive, and after binding up his arm, he mounted his horse and determined to go for aid. A faint "God bless you" had come murmuringly from the lips of the prostrate Colonel, who again closed his eyes with a deep groan.

In the meanwhile Cora had occupied herself busily, hoping soon to see her father return; but having sent Judy several times to the gate to look for him, and she having as often returned with an account of seeing nothing but "boys and other critters," Cora determined if he did not soon come, that she would mount Robin, and go and meet him. She looked often at the clock on the mantel-piece, that had there ticked since she was an infant—and counted the minutes of his prolonged absence. She went frequently to the end of the avenue, and eagerly looked for him, as far as her eyes could peer through every vista where she fancied he might have gone.

As she despairingly seated herself on her return, at the door of the piazza, with her head drooping in thought, Judy came from over a corn-field like a wild goose on the wing, screaming as she came up the steps, "I saw something coming down the lane that looked like a hearse, Miss Cory, only the horses trotted faster. It can't be your pa, can it? I thought I saw somethin' white followin' it, and I run as fast as I could click it. Lord, the grass-hoppers bites this time a year!"

Cora was not alarmed by Judy's superstitious imaginative vision, but talking of hearses did her no good, and she jumped from her seat, and went to the stable for Robin, and then to her chamber for her riding-dress, while Judy constantly talked of the hearse, which soon had a procession attached to it. Sophy, who had by this time heard of Cora's alarm from the gardener, told Judy to "hold her tongue," "that to be sure *she* had dreamed herself of broken looking-glasses, and seen the ants make funerals in the cupboards for a week, but there was no use scaring folks."

Cora was soon on her pony, cantering out of the avenue, when she met on the road a team containing some movable furniture, and probably Judy's "hearse," in the shape of an old piano on a cart. She followed the path which she presumed her father had taken, her face growing whiter every instant. She had not proceeded far into the wood before she met Rufus Wilton—without a coat, hurrying towards home. He had seen something fairy-like, with curls floating on

the breeze, in the distance, and presumed it was Cora, and now knew that it was her father that he had left on the grass. Terror nearly overwhelmed her when she met Wilton. He came towards her, and with serious earnestness said, while he lifted his cap: "I fear that your father is hurt, Miss Cora,"—but as he observed her agitation, added: "I will go with you to him—and then for a physician and aid."

Cora did not faint, as he had feared she would, but with a quivering lip and tearful eyes, bowed assent, and rode by the side of Wilton to the spot where her father lay nearly insensible.

Without a word, the young man lifted her from the saddle, and as he took her hand, said tenderly, "Don't be too much alarmed—loss of blood makes him pale—he has been thrown, but will recover, I think, soon." Cora now burst into tears, and fell on her knees by the side of her father. The young man bent over her for an instant, with a look of sympathy, as he said, "I hate to leave you here;" then raising the head of the Colonel further up on his pillow, without another word leaped into his saddle and rode rapidly away.

The Colonel seemed to know that Cora was beside him, though he did not speak. She held his hand, and with her handkerchief wiped the blood from his forehead. While she remained in suffering anxiety with her injured parent, in the wood, Wilton had procured a physician, and a litter on which to bear him homeward. With assistance, he lifted the Colonel onto the cot, when he was slowly borne to his cottage, ignorant to whom he was indebted for the timely aid rendered.

Wilton then returned to Cora. "Will you ride now?" said he. "I wish this path was wide enough for a carriage, that you might have returned with less fatigue." The party had preceded them, and Cora saw that she could only follow slowly in the rear. It reminded her of a funeral, and having been so long suffering from agitation, she now trembled violently, and tottered as she rose to seek her pony.

"You will feel better when mounted," said Wilton, as she leaned upon his arm. His eyes were fixed on her pale face, and seemed to read into the depths of hers, as he added, "God knows I feel for you."

"You are very good," she replied, "and I show little fortitude. Now give me your hand, and I will ride." Her little foot touched the palm of the young man's hand, when,

with a light spring, she was seated. Wilton having arranged her riding skirt, and having put the reins in her hand, mounted his own horse, and they proceeded onward together. He purposely lingered that the litter might not be constantly in view, and, with silent sympathy, watched Cora, as she tried to be calm, and to nerve herself for the worst. In that hour of sorrow to Cora, Rufus Wilton had involuntarily betrayed much feeling, and though the tongues of each had been for the most time silent, much sympathy had been revealed in love's more expressive language.

The murmuring of leaves, and summer's soft breath had had their tranquilizing power, and Cora grew composed and hopeful. He left her at the gate of the avenue, where many faces greeted her, drawn by curiosity as much as friendship to the scene.

As the Colonel was carried to his room, Judy blubbered audibly, though consoled in private, on the affliction that had befallen the family, in the thought that she should escape his eyes on her, when she set the dishes crooked on the table, and did other little things that "warn't gentlemen's business to see to." On the whole, she thought, if it would be more lonely down stairs, that it would be quite as free and easy.

Days of intense anxiety were passed by Cora at her father's bedside, while his life was often despaired of. He was for many days delirious, and his situation critical, during which time Cora hung on his unconscious words, fearing that each moment would be his last. She grew thin and pale by his couch of suffering, and allowed no one but herself to administer to his wants. While alone with him, during his unconscious hours, and thinking how desolate she would be if deprived of her only parent, she would weep in bitter anguish; and when she prayed for his recovery, if it was the will of God to spare him to her, she then resolved, and vowed in her own heart, to devote herself to him the remainder of her days, while no sacrifice that she could make, should be too great for his happiness. While he lay so pale and ill, and death seemed hovering near, she felt that she had done little for him, and that he had been all the world to her. Cora had led a joyous happy life thus far, but no enjoyments had been entirely satisfying. Her pets, her flowers, her books and music, had engrossed her, but always with vague aspirations after higher ends, such as should give some aim to her life, and peace to a sensitive

conscience. There were times when she looked with earnest eyes towards Heaven. She sought for comfort in her Bible, and at night when she laid her head on her pillow, and when the early birds were singing, her praise went up with the warbling of the little choristers that seemed thus to bless their great Creator. The world had been to her yet so bright and beautiful, and her heart so joyous, that she could not realize that life could be ever clouded, and looked upon the simile that called this world a "vale of tears," as but a poetical fancy. But now she had had her first bitter trial, and grief and anxiety bore heavily upon her. The news was finally communicated to her of her father's freedom from danger. She wept with joy at the intelligence, and while she thanked God, his preserver, she invoked His blessing on him who had been instrumental in saving his life. In feeble accents the invalid talked to her again with consciousness, and made many inquiries relative to his accident. He remembered nothing but his horse's fright and his impending danger, though he had some faint recollection of receiving assistance from some one. He told Cora that he felt much indebted to the person, and wished as soon as he was able to see him, to acknowledge personally his kindness. Cora did not then dare to tell her father who the individual was, lest the information should unpleasantly excite him ; but thought that if he introduced himself, his prejudice against him would be dissipated. So when her father again mentioned the subject, Cora dispatched a note, requesting Mr. Wilton, Jr. to call on her father.

Wilton soon after received the lines of Cora with dubious satisfaction. He felt the embarrassment of calling on the Colonel under existing circumstances, but as affording him a chance of meeting his daughter, the matter seemed worth consideration. He thought over the invitation, and though he considered the grateful acknowledgments which he was summoned to receive a superfluous ceremony, still the sick chamber might prove the vestibule to Cora's boudoir. So he resolved to go at once to Villacora, and Judy had at last the satisfaction of admitting the young man that she had scraped acquaintance with by the gate. She took three strides down the staircase when she saw him coming (and there was little out of doors, or in, that she didn't see), and asked him to walk in, while she called her young mistress. She looked back

again to see the "heap o' hair, and queer big eyes," that at first attracted her, and then strutted herself back unconsciously, to see if she could carry her head and shoulders as he did. She liked him, for some reason, a great deal better than the "city man," as she called Mr. Clarendon. She was always a little afraid of the Colonel, so she whispered to Cora to come down stairs and see *somebody*. She gave a sly wink as she spoke. Cora was not surprised to find Mr. Wilton there, and greeted him with fluttering emotion. Weariness and watching had weakened her nerves, and the pleasure and embarrassment connected with his visit caused her pale cheek to flush, and her lip to grow tremulous as she addressed him. He was scarcely prepared for the change in her appearance, and though she looked to him bewitchingly attractive, her paleness and languor affected him painfully. It seemed to him a cruel thing that she should fade away from confinement. So Rufus thought when he looked upon Cora's lily face, though he did not tell her of his sympathy, but briefly questioned her respecting her health.

"I am not quite well," Cora answered; and, wicked as the thought was, Rufus queried whether it had not been better that the old Colonel should have died at once, than to have brought so much weariness and watching upon her, for he felt sure that she would not need a protector, if he lived to guard her young life. The parlor where they sat was very fragrant, for Judy liked to pick flowers, and as Miss Cora had been busy, she had filled all the vases, and the room was filled with odors which both seemed to appreciate, as they leaned together over a glass of fresh roses and mignonnette.

Cora's cheek had now stolen a blush from the faintest-hued leaf—a color soft as the pink of an ocean shell—while she felt resting upon her face the eyes that told more admiration than a world of courtly tongues could have expressed—her own, meanwhile, busy seemingly, as her fingers, with the little green sprig she held. He did not ask for her father—he seemed to have forgotten his existence—but laid back his head of chestnut curls, and glanced about Cora's home, and lastly and earnestly upon her sweet self, with an expression that spoke of entire happiness. He had much to say to her—much that seemed important—yet he did little but listen to the gentle girl, who told him how she longed for the fresh air, and her old rambles, while he heard more her tones than her words. But there

were beautiful books to look at together, and pictures of engrossing interest, and the comparison to be made between the old Lady Livingston's portrait and Cora's young face. Then Wilton was drawn into a dissertation on the rare old paintings that he saw in Italy, all fading in his mind as he looked upon the young face before him.

"When are you coming out again?" he questioned. "Even the birds miss you, Miss Cora. I can find another and sweeter path than the one we took through the wood, when you festooned your dress so fantastically with burs. Were you home late?"

"Oh! very. Papa doesn't like to have me so adventurous. He thinks, too"—Cora now colored to her temples—"that I am not sufficiently ceremonious in making acquaintances."

"Why—who, pray—should have introduced us?—a bobolink or a squirrel? It was as natural for us to become acquainted as for water to find its level. I may flatter myself too much, but I consider it a special Providence that we should have met, and that the interview had nothing to do with that little robin that would have left a helpless family but for your compassion. Elderly people," he continued, "have, sometimes, strange notions; but if your father would like the introduction more formally made, it shall be done—only come to the same leafy bower for the occasion."

Wilton leaned forward in his own frank, half-familiar way, and with his fascinating smile, archly asked for Cora's acquiescence in his proposal.

"Papa is so punctilious!" was her reply, while she failed to tell him that that was not all the reason why he did not like her to take long rambles.

"Do you think," said he, half-laughing, "that in that thunder-shower, when you was promenading with a gentleman who does not seem to be very weather-wise, on some occasions, that I should have sent you my card before presuming to offer you assistance?"

"Oh, how did you get home?" said Cora, earnestly.

"Well enough. But my clothes haven't dried since. I had a fair trial of the Hydropathic practice that night."

"But where did you procure the umbrella?" questioned Cora. "You had none when we met you at first."

"No. But while you were romancing, I was looking at the clouds, and making provision for you; but little thanks I

received from the gentleman. I did not come for them ; and strange as he may think it, I did not think of him when I procured it."

"You were very good," said Cora, smiling, with engaging sweetness.

"I wish you would give me more opportunity to be very good, Miss Cora, but without suffering to yourself. It is, indeed, too selfish a matter to aid you, to require thanks."

Wilton's manner was playful, but there was an under current of feeling discernible to Cora.

"Papa wants to thank you," said she.

"Can't he do it through his daughter?" said Wilton, "I am a little awkward on such occasions, and feel altogether foolish in accepting any acknowledgments at all for a service that humanity made necessary. Indeed, Miss Cora, I had my private reasons, with all possible respect for your father, in calling here to-day ; and I am more than repaid for anything I could have done already. Don't drive me into an embarrassing position. Tell your father that you thanked me, and I said all appropriate things, and then, you know, I shall not lose one of the moments that I prize more than the gratitude of a nation."

As Wilton spoke, his brilliant eyes beamed with a softer light than Cora had ever seen in them. His tone and manner betrayed his reluctance to leave her. At his request, Cora rose and went to the piano, but her song was tremulous, and her fingers idly performed their task ; conscious of this, Cora invited Wilton to go with her for some grapes for her father. After procuring a basket, they went into the conservatory, where the clusters of purple fruit hung in tempting richness. Here Wilton made himself useful, and asked Cora if she did not think him "very good," a commendation which he felt much inclined to laugh at her for. He found no difficulty in reaching the largest, most luscious bunches, which Cora heaped up with care for the invalid, while the time rapidly passed, enlivened by the chat and good humor of the Colonel's visitor. After the grapes were all culled, and Wilton had plucked some of the sweetest and richest for Cora, they then wandered among the flower-beds, where each bright blossom, in emblematical phrase, furnished a tale of love for her ear. But the winged moments flew on leaden pinions to the lonely parent, who had ascertained from Judy the arrival of a gentleman,

whom he presumed to be the one who had aided him in the wood. He therefore sent a message into the garden to Cora, to bring him to his chamber.

With a comical sigh Wilton received the summons, while he looked imploringly at Cora ; but she told him that her father was expecting him, and hoped he would go up to see him.

The Colonel, not knowing him, was somewhat embarrassed upon the entrance of young Wilton ; and as Cora did not pronounce his name very audibly, he was long puzzled with the sight of a face and form which seemed to haunt his recollection. After the salutation of the Colonel, Wilton seated himself at a distance from the bed ; where, after receiving the coldly expressed thanks of the former, for the service he had rendered him, he bowed—not stiffly, for that he could not do, but in a manner that seemed to say, “ You are performing a very idle ceremony, sir.” Wilton then looked at the bed-curtains, the pictured window-shades, the bottles on the stand, and lastly on the somewhat silvered head and pale face that so scrutinizingly regarded him. They then conversed on indifferent topics in a very indifferent manner ; but each moment that the Colonel looked, seemed to increase his interest in the individual before him. The room was darkened, and the features of Wilton were somewhat indistinct on the vision of the Colonel. But a shutter suddenly unclosed, when they were fully exhibited. The blood mounted to the temples of the sick man. Before him was vividly portrayed a resemblance of one he could never through life forget—the once brilliant Rosa Neville.

The air, manner, and voice seemed also to bespeak another. With a muttered voice he said :

“ Did I understand aright, sir, your name to be Wells ?”

“ My name is Wilton,” said the young man, audibly, while he looked full in the face of the Colonel.

“ I was much mistaken—yet I might have known it.”

Wilton observed the change in his countenance, and the coolness on the part of their families flashed across his mind suddenly and unpleasantly—his pride was touched by his situation—he felt instantly unwelcome.

Immediately rising, he said, “ You may regret your summons, sir, since the light has revealed me.” Then, with a carriage a trifle more erect than when he entered, he made a slight inclination of his head, and took his hat to go.

The Colonel hemmed, and said, coldly, "I would not be ungrateful, still, sir,"——

"Excuse me," interrupted the young man; while, with *hauteur* and inaccessible dignity, he awed the Colonel into silence. The latter instinctively felt that his visitor was not one to receive ungracious incivilities or words of heartless import; and as he looked again upon the retreating figure and lofty bearing of one to whom he owed so much, not one trace of its recent sweetness of expression lingered in his face; he was now more like his father than the mother he remembered so well. With cool civility Rufus Wilton left the presence of the Colonel, and entered the parlor where Cora had retreated after the inaudible introduction she had made between her father and his visitor. She saw instantly the mood of the latter was changed.

She had waited for his coming, and with some solicitude watched the result of his visit.

"How did papa seem to you?" said Cora.

"I think he will recover speedily," said Wilton. A slight expression of offended pride was observable in the tone in which he spoke.

"Are you sorry you went to see him?" questioned Cora, ingenuously.

"I think that I might as well have not gone," replied the young man. "I ought to have remembered his prejudices."

"Were they exhibited on *this* occasion?" said Cora, with evident pain.

"Miss Cora, I believe I possess a sad temper—too much sensitiveness, perhaps, on some occasions. It was evident to me that when my name was understood, that I was not a welcome visitor to your father. I could not be an intruder. You see my position; therefore, I am also forced to say, good bye to you—*now*. May this state of things not always exist!" Wilton's expression did not change, but he pressed Cora's hand fervently in both his own, as he bade her adieu.

Cora looked grieved. Rufus Wilton observed it, and for a moment her fingers were raised to his lips; the next, he had left the cottage.

Cora returned sadly to her father's room. She found him awake, and somewhat excited. He called his daughter to come and sit beside him. She obeyed, and discovered that his fever had risen sensibly since she had left him.

"I suppose Mr. Wilton is gone," said he. "I am shocked to find that he was the gentleman who aided me when I fell."

"Why shocked, papa?"

"How little you know, child, of the state of things that render such an obligation unpleasant."

"Is it not better to forgive, as we hope to be forgiven?"

"We are not bound to forgive Satan himself."

"Oh, dear papa!"

"Would you have me make friends with a wolf that had eaten my child? I don't know this young Wilton. He treated my civilities with haughtiness—insolence—Cora."

"It does not seem like him to do so," said Cora, mildly.

"It is very much like him, if he is a Wilton. His bearing was like a lord, when he fancied himself unwelcome."

"You sent for him, dear papa."

"I never sent for a *Wilton*, Cora."

"Still, papa, he is the one who almost saved your life. I can never forget how kind he was to you. He ought not to have left here pained and slighted."

"Slighted! Cora. You cannot slight such a man as that. You can only meet him on equal ground. That is why I feel it—he has the advantage of me. His pride I cannot break—I see that in his eye—but the time will come when no Wilton shall own a foot of my father's premises."

"Oh! papa, do not think so much of wealth. Could I only see your spirit softened, your pride quelled, it would be worth more to me than expectations of future inheritance."

"You are, as Byron says, Cora,—

'A precious judge—shook by a sigh,
And melted by a tear.'

Darken the room, my daughter, and I will go to sleep."

Cora kissed her father, and closed the shutters, then retreated to a small recess by a window which commanded a view of the flower garden.

The yellow beams of an October sun shone through the lattice. She looked at the brown and crimson leaves as they fell noiselessly to the earth, and thought how short the time had been since she had loved to rustle them along, and watch the little whirlwinds that carried them circling around.

The atmosphere was mild and hazy, such a delicious day as autumn only affords, tranquil and soft as Eve might have enjoyed in golden Eden.

The most gorgeous flowers were blooming, though they lent little perfume to the air. Cora looked admiringly upon the rows of brilliant dahlias and gay artemisias, from the most superb orange to every hue of red and purple. Fading flowers were also lying about, drooping from their crumbling stalks, their seeds dropping plentifully, making Cora think of old Goody, and wondering if she had gathered in her harvest of flower seeds, and she wished that she had time to collect some for her. Then her eye rested on the blended hues of the maple-grove, and from thence to the scarlet berries of the sumach, now brilliant as the pomegranate in its prime, as they hung like clusters of coral from their still green branches. It was a long time since Cora had been much in the open air, and her health had suffered from the confinement. Like many fond parents, Colonel Livingston was a selfish one. He was unhappy unless his idol was ever in sight, forgetting that her delicate frame required its usual invigorating exercise, and she was so self-sacrificing that to her own health she was indifferent, while she could make her father comfortable and happy. The Colonel roused from a short nap, and missed his daughter, and reproached her for leaving him. He was in an irritable mood, and dissatisfied with everything. Cora tried to indulge his whims, and in her serene patience, like one of earth's angels, ministered to each want.

Sophy had made his gruel too salt, and Judy, he said, "made such a constant noise, that he had not been able to sleep since morning." This Cora did not deny, although she had sent her out of the house after Mr. Wilton left, lest she should disturb her father. Still it was Judy who was in fault, who, with all her misdemeanors, was not always as guilty as she was esteemed. Cora knew her father to be a disappointed, and now a suffering man, and unweariedly endeavored to calm his turbulence of feeling. She finally, by singing his favorite songs, lulled him into a calm slumber, and feeling languid and sad, from various causes, sunk beside his pillow, and soon fell asleep. By the haggard face of the invalid lay the head of the youthful watcher, buried in its waves of gold—a careless and beautiful picture. Her countenance was calm and peaceful, though looking a little flushed and wearied. Sleep gave almost infantile

grace to her attitude, as, with one arm thrown upward, she breathed like a tired child. While father and daughter thus slept, she half sitting, half reclining, as she rested on his pillow, Mr. Clarendon arrived at Villacora on a visit to the Colonel, to whom he had been faithful and attentive during his illness.

He had rarely waited for admittance, but generally came to the door of his bedroom, where he was ever a welcome visitor. He now, as usual, came up stairs, and finding the door ajar, walked lightly in. The situation of Cora and her father startled Mr. Clarendon, who at first retreated, but observing their slumber sound, was tempted to approach the fair sleeper. He came nearer—she did not stir—the Colonel breathed heavily. The visitor raised one light curl from her cheek, and stood enchanted with her loveliness. Soon a smile played about her mouth, while her muslin drapery rose and fell with the now hurried breath that seemed to agitate her bosom. Both arms are now raised, and twined above her head, while her red, parted lips are crimson as the rose she wears in her hair. And this fair young girl, he thought, so perfect in repose, he would make his wife. As he stood admiring the unconscious Cora, a sigh escaped her—then came a low, soft whisper—he bent his ear—she murmured the name of Wilton. Mr. Clarendon turned and went below stairs, and thence into the parlor.

He was not a believer in dreams, generally, but his own ears had not deceived him—Cora had breathed a stranger's name—was it that of the sportsman? Soon after Cora awoke refreshed. She had had sweet visions of happiness, and so young a heart needs little to awaken joy. She believed that her father would feel differently, when he recovered, towards her young friend. Judy had been to tell her of Mr. Clarendon's arrival, and also of his "peeking at her, when she was asleep," which Cora could not believe; Judy having stood all the time in the doorway, behind a fire-screen.

So Cora went down to greet him, and to ask him up stairs. But Mr. Clarendon detained her, while he jestingly alluded to her "talking in her sleep," which he said had afforded him much amusement, and attracted his attention into her father's room, where he confessed that he had not only been, but had watched her a full hour. "Now," he continued, more jealous than he liked to own, "you had better make a full con-

fession of all you have been dreaming about, to keep me from exposing all I have heard."

Cora was teased, and somewhat alarmed, lest in her sleep she had said something foolish, and was really vexed that their visitor should have dared to intrude at such a moment, while she was unconscious of his presence.

She showed her annoyance and embarrassment evidently, which the more excited Mr. Clarendon to continue to rally her, and when he in a whisper told her that he had learned the name of "the sportsman" from her own lips while asleep, Cora's face crimsoned deeply. She felt that the tale of Clarendon was now true, for she knew that while she was slumbering on her father's pillow, that in dreaming fancy she was elsewhere, and that the grapes in the arbor were not yet half picked.

In vain Cora begged Mr. Clarendon to go up stairs to her father. He felt that he had now some clue to her secret, and he wished to know how formidable a rival he had to combat, and how strong a hold he had on the heart of Cora. But when she told him that Mr. Wilton had just called on her father, and that he was instrumental in saving the Colonel's life, he was seriously alarmed, and more than ever excited to win the prize, spurred on by competition. And as Cora had been unusually kind to him since she had declined receiving his addresses, he had at least as free and uninterrupted enjoyment of her society—now that she felt that all was understood between them.

Still his aim was steady, and his course as politic as if stronger demonstration evinced his preference. He was more than ever in the society of the Colonel and none the less in the good will of the daughter.

CHAPTER XV.

"There was a laughing devil in his sneer,
That caused emotions both of rage and fear."

"I OBSERVED," said Mr. Roger Wilton to his son, "that a note came to you this morning from Livingston's. Pray what can be the matter? Are you consulting physician in his case? Your experiment in surgery to-day must have earned you a diploma. It was a thousand pities to have spilled any of his *blood*. He must have deplored it. Pray what was it made of?"

"You are satirical, and I am unequal to a tilt with you, sir. I am contented with my efforts, and have had no reason to regret the slight service I rendered an injured man."

"It may, perhaps, be questioned whether all lives are worth saving."

"There is little time to inquire into a man's estimated value with his neighbors, when his life is at stake; and if the humanity exercised depended on their favorable opinion, their situation might be somewhat critical," replied the son, coolly.

"It might be an act of humanity to rid the world of some of its excrescences, and well, also, to take wider views of benevolence—to think of general as well as individual good. In this case, you did infinite service. But for this accident your medical skill might have never been known; but I trust that in your hot pursuit, you did not founder your steed, or trample on a defenceless goose that might have left a motherless brood."

"I believe, sir, that I did to-day more good than evil; at least, I meant to."

"Disinterestedly, of course! Am happy to hear that there is some prospect of grafting some of the Livingston stock on to our family tree. This is one way to settle a lawsuit. Am glad to hear, too, that you are so accommodating to my lord's views. But are you sure that the compromise can be amicably settled?"

"You must excuse me," said the young man, "if I am too fresh to understand you. Perhaps I may yet be as accomplished an intriguer as my father could wish. At present, I only know enough to be governed by my inclinations."

Rufus Wilton despised any covert insinuations ; his own disposition was open and frank, and sarcasm and ill-nature annoyed him. He rose to leave the apartment, but the entrance of Uncle Peter, with his broad, good-humored face, prevented him. The latter presented an entire contrast to his pale, sarcastic brother.

"What's in the wind?" he exclaimed. "Quick to your traps and rigging, Rufe. We are all going to the Captain's this evening."

"I intended reminding you of the engagement," said the elder Wilton ; "and it would gratify me, my son, to see you civil to his daughter, instead of wasting your time on a girl not worth a farthing."

"I am engaged," said Rufus Wilton, shortly.

"I trust that your engagements can be set aside, without affecting the interests of the state. A good day for a bite? Are you on the scent for a partridge, or some flaxen ringlets under a sun-bonnet? I should think a young man, with your education and *foreign culture* (here Mr. Wilton sneered), would look a little to money in a wife, as well as to the curls you can find on any poodle."

"Which poodle ringlets I could certainly find in abundance at neighbor Sapp's. My engagements are my own, of whatever nature ; and I consider it proper, and not disrespectful, to say, that if you and Captain Sapp anticipate any connection of your pecuniary interests through my marriage with his daughter, that you are doomed to disappointment."

"Rufe," said Uncle Peter, "you are rash, my boy. Take a wife as coolly as you would procure a cat, both will get wanted. Come with us, my boy. The pups ain't all at home, some have gone to Cuby for their health—what haven't died in fits ; a pretty trick you served me last summer, what between the girl and the dog I liked to have had a fit myself. Look here, young man, I have a private word for you." Here Uncle Peter whispered audibly. "I'll court her a leetle for you, though I do see more sugar casks than women."

"I have no doubt," said Rufus, his good humor restored, "that you have been a veteran under the banner of Cupid."

I grant you the honor you have tendered me, a clear field."

"Let him off, Roger, I'll take care of the lady—all in the family, Rufe." Uncle Peter made a squint which he meant to be quizzical, but being naturally cross-eyed, gave him the appearance of going into an epileptic spasm.

"I suppose," said Mr. Wilton, senior, "the affair must be got through with or without the young gentleman."

"By ginger!" said Uncle Peter, picking up his cane and shell-bowed specs, "West India trade is clear. Hornets and scorpions! how her eyes snap, like hornbugs, or a cat's back a dark night; but them pups—how I hate 'em! I, old Sam's son-in-law, rising o' fifty! but who knows it? Wasn't raised in these parts—adopted down-east, where codfish grows. Firm 'Wilton and Sapp,' West India Merchants. Curculios and fireflies! A bachelor's life is a mean one; 'tain't living, it ain't respectable."

So Uncle Peter ruminated on his way to Captain Sapp's, his dignified brother following in the rear. Miss Sally was in readiness to receive them, though disappointed at the absence of the junior member of the family. The gorgeousness of her dress was now fated to alone bedizen the eyes of the admiring Uncle Peter. Even her retinue of negroes were dressed in uniform, with yellow kilts and bandanna turbans, each with a bunch of peacock feathers to brandish over the table, now loaded with imported delicacies; but as others, who more awaken our interest, have no share in the feast, we will leave the supper party.

Rufus Wilton was relieved by the departure of his father and uncle, and hoped his decisive remarks would close all further matrimonial speculations for him. The season was approaching when he had anticipated passing the winter in New York, but his present passion for Cora made him indifferent to aught else. He wandered over the grounds of the Park, until he reached the monuments under the willows.

As he sat down upon a tablet, on which was inscribed the name of LIVINGSTON, his thoughts wandered to his mother's destiny. She came before his imagination young and beautiful; for so had she been pictured to him, and he now wondered if he should ever find her grave.

He took from his waistcoat a small box of wrought silver,

inlaid with pearl, which he had recently found among some neglected rubbish. It contained such trifling mementoes of friendship as young girls sometimes prize. A little gold heart rolled in cotton, lay in one corner of the box, suspended from a short chain, which, from its length, he imagined she might have clasped about her throat. Trinkets of different workmanship lay beside it ; but what was of most interest to him was, a ring set with a brilliant diamond. Upon the inner surface of the ring he found the letters E. L. and R. N. engraved.

He placed this upon his little finger, and prized it as a relic of inestimable value. He believed it to have been one worn by his mother. Among these treasures was a long, beautiful curl of chestnut hair, entwined with a shorter lock of a darker hue. The latter bore no resemblance to the hair of his father, and he was confident from the length and beauty of the former tress, that it came from the head of his mother. He still kept these relics in the little silver box, and treasured them as above price. He now sat long on the tombstones, while he re-examined them, falling meanwhile in a deep reverie.

The last of October had approached. It was the Indian summer, when the air was serene, and scarce a breath lifted a dying leaf from the tallest tree-top, while the sun was going down a blood red ball, behind its misty yellow veil—an atmosphere peculiar to our sky in autumn when the forest leaves die, as the dolphin yields his breath in his brightest hues. The evening was so soft, Wilton felt its influence, and he was long inclined to meditate while he sat on the stones beneath the willows. He here resolved that at no distant time he would demand of his father a full explanation of the mystery attending his mother's fate, also sift to the bottom the causes of her elopement from her home. It was an agonizing thought to him, that she might be suffering, while he was living in comfort and affluence. He took from his finger the ring which he had found, and examined again the initials. He knew many who bore the same. He thought of the old walnut desk, in his father's private apartment, always so securely locked. He remembered that he once saw the latter, when he deemed himself alone, take a miniature from one of its drawers, wipe the dust from the ivory, and return it to its hiding-place without emotion. He was then a boy. But he

had since seen him lock the secret drawer where he placed it, and fasten the desk ; then, to be sure of the safety of his possessions, return and try the security of the lock that guarded them. Young Wilton thought of the bearing of these things upon his mother's history ; but had any individual detracted, to his knowledge, from his father's honor, he would have quickly resented the affront. The doubt that harassed his mind respecting the honorable course of his parent made him the more jealous of his reputation, and as time added dignity to his stature and bearing, rumors which came to the ears of the boy, were silenced in presence of the man. He deplored the inefficacy of search, such as he had privately made, having not one thread on which to guide him in ascertaining her fate. He had little knowledge of his mother's relations, excepting that her family had come from Virginia, and that she had a brother in India, who considered him now his *protégé*, and his future heir. At stated periods, he had received, from boyhood, liberal sums of money from his wealthy bachelor relative, and he hoped, at some future day, to see him. He had often written him respecting his mother, but had never received any satisfactory reply. The little box was, therefore, all he possessed that was associated with her, and he kept it, as a talisman. Gold or jewels from the richest diadem could not have bought it. As evening came on, he returned to the house, where, as his father and uncle had gone out, he remained alone.

Here all was old-fashioned splendor and comfort. The furniture was antique, and richly carved. The old desk was there, which for years he had longed to open. The cottage of Villacora was visible from the windows, in the distance. He thought of Cora, as he looked forth from them, and marvelled that a being once loved could ever become an object of indifference. But his father's nature had been always a mystery, and his characteristics more than ever puzzled him, when he thought of her who had abandoned him so early in their married life, in the spring-time of her loveliness, leaving behind her the only child, and that an infant.

CHAPTER XVI.

The bleak wind whistles—snow showers far and near,
Drift without echo to the whitening ground ;
Autumn hath passed away, and cold and drear,
Winter stalks in, with frozen mantle bound.

Mrs. NORTON.

THE autumnal season had passed, with its sunny days and mellow influences. The bright tinted leaves had fallen, their color had faded, and now wore the dusky hue that precedes their state of crumbling decay, and were being scattered and strewn by the desolating winds of winter, which already blew through the naked branches.

The birds that Cora loved had deserted their leafless homes for a more genial sky ; but if she sighed for her woodland favorites, her own blithesome song was no less merry in their absence. Her father's recovery had given her fresh spirits, and in her happy, but quiet home, she found amusement enough to wile away the rainiest or most gloomy day. She loved winter—its clear, sunny mornings, when through the frosted panes she could look out upon the sparkling snow, or diamond gemmed branches that rattled in the north wind, like thousands of jewels, against the window-panes. She loved the sound of the sleigh-bells, as they went merrily by ; and at noonday to see the eaves drip, in the beaming sunshine that melted, at last, the rainbow-hued icicles. And well, too, she loved the long winter evenings, with the cheerful hearth blaze and brilliantly lighted fireside ; when, after making her father comfortable with his slippers, his arm-chair, his newspaper, and specs, she sat with him with her work or book, sometimes at his side, and often, like a child, by his knee. And although Judy had been ever a troublesome comfort, still she had become attached to her, and she liked to hear her merry song about the house, and to see her black eyes dance at the

prospect of any new amusement, such as Cora generously afforded her in the way of cracking hickory nuts, making molasses candy at evening, or hanging up her blue stocking at Christmas. Cora did not forget that Judy was still but a child, and loved childish things, if she was compelled by poverty to go out so early to service. And Cora was repaid for her thoughtfulness of Judy, for the young heart that beat with joy at some promised amusement, never forgot the kindness of her young mistress ; and as she grew older she manifested her gratitude in many pleasant ways, that encouraged Cora that Judy was not a bad child after all her pranks and mischief.

Wrapped to the ears in furs, Cora traversed the frosty roads, and through by-paths, and over hedges, either for the enjoyment of the keen air, or for the comfort of some old or young body that she had taken a fancy to make comfortable. And then, too, the neighbors came in often at night ; and no time seemed better for a chat than after she had returned from her walk, her spirits exhilarated, and her cheek glowing with exercise and the winter's cold.

Old Goody had grown stiff, since December came in, notwithstanding Cora's poppy-rum, which one of the neighbors showed her how to make for the old woman, and the most she could do was to tie up her flower-seeds for the next spring, which season she had known would "sartain be her last" for at least ten years. The old yellow cat didn't mind her groaning, but purred away at her feet as soothingly as in her more frolicking kitten days. It is true that, notwithstanding her peaceful habits, she had a way of raising her back when Frisk came in, but her bump of self-esteem being seemingly here located, it was not strange that she made some demonstration of her consequence, considering that Frisk took airs upon himself for so small a dog, whatever his situation in life.

Mr. Clarendon was more than ever attentive to the Colonel, while his visits had become essential to his happiness ; and Cora sometimes saw, with apprehension, that devotion from the same source to herself was also gratifying to him. These visits had not escaped notice either in town or country, and Cora was pronounced by many the affianced bride of their visitor ; but it had been a long time since Mr. Clarendon had even distantly approached the subject of love or marriage to Cora, though he spared no effort to win her favor.

She was grateful to him for cheering her father during his still feeble health, and was blind to the aim that prompted the kindness. She saw not that he was restless and dissatisfied during his evening visits at the cottage, until she took her seat by the hearth, and her playfulness cast its wonted charm over their circle ; for he did not outwardly betray his impatience. With the same avidity he sought the chess-board for a game with her father ; and though he never omitted the kind word, or more flattering look, to herself, the Colonel seemed the object of his visits.

At his earnest request, Cora occasionally consented to take a sleigh-ride with him ; and never did Louis Clarendon enjoy more pure happiness than when, after sheltering her so carefully beneath the robes that not a breath of cold could chill her, he took under the wing of his protection the delicate being that he would shield through life. He loved to watch her blue eyes, lit by the brilliancy of a winter's sun, and the bloom that the frosty air brought to her cheeks and lips. The arch of heaven seemed to him no purer than the radiance of the first, and the golden sunbeams of no warmer tint than the hair which played on the cold north wind.

Cora protested that so much care was needless, and that her feet were not in such constant danger of freezing, though she was often grateful for his attention to little Frisk, who kept losing himself in snow-banks ; though this accommodating spirit, manifested by taking him in the sleigh, was never exhibited to anything less human than Cora's little dog.

One beautiful moonlight night, when the atmosphere was so very still and cold, that not a breath seemed to stir the trees that sparkled brilliantly—when fairies seemed to have been at work making crystal kingdoms of pearl and silver, and everywhere the eye was enchanted with the glittering sheen—on such a night, Mr. Clarendon invited Cora to take a ride with him. She at first declined the request, for her father had stirred up more vigorously the bright blazing embers, while with a “whew !” and a shrug, as he came in, he exclaimed, “Very cold !” and hung the thermometer outside ; while Sophy, the gardener, and Judy, gathered themselves closer over the kitchen stove, the former having brought the milk out of the cupboard, and neared the buckwheat-pan to the fire, so that the batter might rise for breakfast ; while Judy said, putting her eyes and nose in, that “it was ris enough now, and

that it better be baked before it froze stiffer than the ice-pond." All these domestic reports made the evening seem to Cora, as Jamie said that it was, "oncommon cold;" but after looking out upon the extreme beauty of the night, the glittering icicles that sparkled in the moonbeams, on the trees and bushes, and the brilliant northern lights that shot up their rays from the horizon, Cora could no longer refuse.

After an out-door observation by the Colonel also, and a quicker coming in, while he banged the door, and stamped his snowy boots, he gave a reluctant consent to the sleigh-ride, thinking that if Mr. Clarendon proposed it, it must be a judicious movement. So Cora ran to her chamber with unusual satisfaction to dress herself, for she greatly enjoyed a sleigh-ride, and was not fastidious about her company.

Mr. Clarendon's late silence regarding his old attachment and hopes had entirely relieved her apprehensions, and she had for some time evinced friendly feelings towards him.

After wrapping herself in a cloak, with a close hood and furs, she stepped gaily into the sleigh, and was as merry as a child at the prospect of a swift ride through the snow. Mr. Clarendon preferred a cutter, that he might drive himself; and Cora being well tucked in, her fair face and wild ringlets being only visible, Mr. Clarendon took the reins, and away the horses flew. Cora laughed merrily at the sallies of her companion, and was herself unusually playful in conversation. Down the avenue, through the open gate (where Jamie stood to shut it), under the frosted branches of the chestnut grove, out into the open lane, thence into the high road, and over hill and descending ground, the horses coursed with bounding speed and swiftness; while faster, still faster, trotted the spirited animals, who seemed to sympathize with Cora's love of rapid motion.

The snow had newly fallen, and but a part of the road was well broken. The country shone in the moonlight, like a bed of sparkling crystal, having been crusted over in fresh beauty.

At times they were obliged to slacken their speed, impeded by a drift, but Mr. Clarendon felt like encountering no obstacles, and dashed on to the main road, with fearless precipitancy. The night-air became so still, that the extreme severity of the atmosphere was not at first heeded, while beneath their furs and thick covering they looked forth upon the radiant landscape. Cora's spirits rose as they proceeded, and so joyously excited Mr. Clarendon onward, that he became almost

reckless in his rapid driving. She sung the gayest songs she knew, while her companion occasionally joined her in the chorus. "So I would like to go through life," said Mr. Clarendon, "fast and gaily."

"Not quite so recklessly, I hope," said Cora, who now endeavored to check their speed by gentle remonstrance, she having noticed that the road was now badly broken, and in some places narrow. Mr. Clarendon perceived that the cold was increasing, and tucked the robes more closely about them, while he proposed to her to drive to an inn, not far distant, where they could find fire and refreshment. Cora was now comfortable, and forgot her prudence in the enjoyment of her ride. The road in the light of the moon sometimes presented a delusive appearance. The smooth, brilliant surface spread over the country, seemed made for the play of the gliding runner, and now they proceeded more slowly; Cora's wild spirits were calmed, and in animated conversation the moments swiftly flew. They came to a ravine, covered on one side with a grove of hemlock and underbrush, which, in summer, was thick with foliage, but now drifted up to the tops of the evergreens in one vast body of snow, while the other side descended to a brook, now densely frozen. One side of the road was occasionally left in shadow, bewildering the most familiar eye, regarding the true path. But Mr. Clarendon was ignorant of the state of these roads in winter, and at any time unfamiliar with country sleigh-riding, consequently the surface over which he drove, bordered by glittering bushes, looked like a safe and easy pathway; so with less vigilance he drove on, increasing momentarily their speed, until Cora suddenly screamed "Look out for the slope, you are near the edge!"

"No danger," said Mr. Clarendon, "only keep warm; that you will be chilled is all that occasions me fear;" driving meanwhile on the edge of the hillock, above the ravine—nearer—*nearer* he came to the slope, one runner went over, and next went the sleigh! Both were suddenly upset into the deep snow that filled the ravine, while the horses dashed about uncontrollably in their flight. Mr. Clarendon tried in vain to hold them, they leaped the hillocks with the upset sleigh, and furiously dashed out of sight.

In dismay, Mr. Clarendon extricated himself from the burden of snow that covered him, and made a plunge for Cora, who was to her waist in a drift, with her eyes blinded, and her

hands powerless, beneath the crusted surface that she had thought so beautiful. He drew her as quickly as possible from the bank into which she had been thrown, and placed her in a spot not over ankle deep, while he anxiously inquired if she was hurt.

As soon as Cora could speak, she tried to play the heroine, and to laugh at their dilemma, but when she found that the horses had fled with the sleigh and robes, and that they were left in a snow bank, on an intensely cold night, in such a road, more than a mile from any habitation, she knew that her energy and fortitude was required as well as Mr. Clarendon's, for their emergency—for unsheltered, they must feel the cold in its full severity.

Mr. Clarendon was much alarmed, but kept his fears from Cora, who needed all his courage and activity.. He looked for one moment upon the deep snow as it lay one pure mass over field and hedge, on the scarcely discernible path before him, and then at the delicate being thrown that cold night upon his protection.

The severity of the atmosphere had much increased since they left home. He remembered the situation of the inn he had proposed reaching, and his courage rose with the emergency of the case. He could easily, he felt, have found it in summer, but now the drifted snow blinded him.

Cora gave him the true direction, and though shivering and trembling, declared herself equal to the walk. Mr. Clarendon drew her cloak more closely about her, and encouraged her to proceed instantly forward, knowing that their only safety was in action. He assured her that he could carry her himself through the drifts. They started on well, and Cora walked rapidly, considering her cold feet and the uneven path. The road became finally impassable for her, and they were now so much further from home than the inn, that they could not return. Alone, Mr. Clarendon could have progressed, but Cora was powerless to proceed ; he could not now even aid her frail footsteps through the snow. There was but one course for him to pursue. He lifted her in his arms, and struggled onward. At every appearance of a path he allowed her to walk, and thus they overcame half the distance towards the inn. But Cora became so extremely cold, that Mr. Clarendon slackened his pace to ascertain her real situation. For a moment he rested against a frozen stump, to look about him.

The cold, bright moon lit her pure, pale cheek, now as white as the snow-drifts they trod. He sought to hold her cold face next his own, but she hastily buried it in her muff, while her teeth chattered, and the tears froze on her cheek. He rubbed her hands violently and placed them within the fur while he said—"I would die to save you this—cling to me, I must carry you a little further, and then you can walk—poor child! How can I forgive myself."

Cora knew that the road would soon be passable, that the thicket was always drifted, and she tried to be courageous and bear her suffering.

With heavy plunges, Mr. Clarendon overcame the worst banks, and bravely proceeded on, but he was soon benumbed, and forced to use the utmost exertion to keep up vital warmth; but what chiefly alarmed him was the lassitude that seemed creeping over Cora. She no longer plead to walk. Her head drooped, and her hands fell by her side, powerless. She grew languid in her tones, and no longer rejected his efforts to guard her. He wrapped his own coat around her, and strode on as a case only of impending death could carry him. He saw a light through the trees. Agony at the situation of the now helpless girl gave new impetus to his movements, aside from his own sufferings. He shouted long and powerfully for help, and when assistance came he had sunk prostrate on a bed of snow, almost as senseless as Cora. Through active exertion they were borne in a sleigh to a place of comfortable shelter. With remedies, Mr. Clarendon soon recovered, but Cora remained some time in a stupor. She was carried to bed, and vigorous measures used for her restoration. With inexpressible joy, Mr. Clarendon at length witnessed her returning animation; and what gave him almost as sweet satisfaction, he heard her utter with grateful emotion while she extended him her hand—"Thank God, through His mercy, and your energy, we are safe."

The horses had proceeded violently homeward, with a remnant of the cutter, which alarming circumstance induced the Colonel to send them instant relief. But the sleigh did not reach them until they had arrived at the inn, where they were found in a revived, refreshed condition, though still weak from suffering. Cora was so anxious to return home that Mr. Clarendon consented, after providing every necessary comfort for her cold ride.

Nearly enveloped in furs, with artificial heat, to keep from her every sensation of cold, she again proceeded towards the cottage she left in such high spirits. Mr. Clarendon was wholly absorbed with the care of her, and was rejoiced when she sunk against his shoulder in a calm and sweet slumber, as free from cold as on a summer night.

Her almost distracted parent received his trembling child with deep emotion, and when, to his infinite joy, she exclaimed that she had entirely recovered, he forgave Clarendon for his heedlessness, and the accident which seemed to him wholly without reasonable cause.

The house was in a state of bustling excitement long after her arrival, and Cora was in almost as much danger of dying of heat as she had been of cold, for such fires were made as had never been before seen or felt at Villacora. It was useless for the idolized daughter to protest that she was warm, well, and comfortable, or for Mr. Clarendon to direct the Colonel's attention to her now brilliant color. The hot negus was prepared, and she must drink it ; the cushioned chair, enveloped in blankets, was drawn up before the blazing hearth, and Cora must sit in it, with her feet on hot bricks prepared for her by Sophy, while Judy knelt by the side of her to rub her hands, which she had already lifted in despair at the melting proceedings.

The Colonel became composed, however, on witnessing her evident recovery, and listened to the tale of their adventure communicated by Mr. Clarendon, with calmness and philosophy. Cora was finally considered sufficiently warm for the hot blankets which received her, where she was soon in a sound sleep, without even a dream of her sleigh-ride.

Mr. Clarendon remained at Villacora until late the next day, but he did not see Cora, who could not afterwards be persuaded, (at least that season) to take another sleigh-ride in the country. With many kind messages to her, Mr. Clarendon took leave, ejaculating "that it was the first time a young lady had nearly frozen to death in his company."

CHAPTER XVII.

Yes, fair as the Syren, but false as her song,
Are the world's painted shadows that lure us along.

Mrs. S. J. HARR.

AFTER breakfast the following day, letters were handed Colonel Livingston, one of which occasioned him much excitement.

It was an anonymous communication, and written evidently in a disguised hand, and ran as follows :

"Abandon your suit against Mr. Wilton—the evidence will yet appear that will establish your claim."

Colonel Livingston read this note many times, and marvelled much whence it came, and what information he was yet to receive respecting the matter so interesting to him.

The letter gave him new hopes and fresh spirits. He desired immediately to see Mr. Clarendon, and determined to send for him without delay. In his surprise he forgot to hand to Cora a letter which had come by the same mail—a letter almost as exciting to her as his own. But she caught a view of it, although the handwriting was reversed to her eye.

"Is not that letter in your left hand for me, papa?" said Cora.

"I ask your pardon, my child—it is, most certainly."

Cora took the epistle, and after reading it handed to her father, while she said,

"Read it, papa—may I go?"

"Go? my daughter—where?—let me see! Colonel Livingston pondered slowly over the contents of Cora's letter, when he handed it to her with an equivocal smile.

It contained an invitation from her cousin, Fannie Livingston, of New York, to attend her wedding, and to officiate as bridesmaid. This cousin was one of whom she had seen little since a child. She was a highly-bred fashionable girl of three-and-twenty years, not handsome, but stylish, and some-

what haughty. She had, since her *début*, been bent upon making an eligible match, and, as it seemed to her, had now succeeded. She had heard much of the budding charms of her young cousin, but not until her own contract was fairly made, would she risk herself much in contrast with her pretty relative.

Colonel Livingston had felt this neglect of his daughter, which he jealously ascribed to his own narrowed fortunes. But the anonymous letter which he had just received, gave a new coloring to all matters, and he accepted the courtesy now extended them with friendliness.

"Do you wish to go, Cora?" he inquired. "I am afraid these New Yorkers will laugh at my little rustic."

"Let them laugh then," said Cora. "Little will be expected of me, and few will notice me; but if one is called 'rustic,' I don't think it should cause unhappiness."

As Cora spoke, she stood more erect, her air was more dignified, and her full, clear eye beamed with a truthful light. Her father looked proudly upon her. She needs but society, thought he, to show her blood. He then looked from his daughter to an old painting which hung upon the wall of the apartment. It was a portrait of one of his ancestors; and he thought he could trace some resemblance in his daughter to the revered picture.

"You may yet look like your old grandmother, Cora," he said. "She was nearly related to Queen Mary of Scotland, and had the same style of beauty. This picture has been handed down from generations to me. I would not take thousands for it. It once hung in Linlithgow Castle in Scotland, and there your ancestors lie buried, excepting those in this country."

"Those at Wilton Park?" inquired Cora.

"At 'Livingston Park.' I do not recognize this bastard name. Do you not see on the silver before you, the crest of our family? on these old tankards, these spoons, bearing our name and seal. These came to you from your mother; you know that she was from the same stock. At your marriage these shall all be yours, and our coat of arms on your carriage; but proper family pride is dying out in this country."

"I shouldn't like that old dragon on my carriage, papa."

"I am afraid, my daughter, that you have not pride enough to wish for a carriage at all."

"Oh, yes. I love to ride, and to drive too. I like luxury, and often go to dreamland in a fairy phaeton—a perfect Venus car, with superb horses, flying through the air"—

"Whom do you go there *with*, with such grand equipage?"

Cora was provoked with her rising color, which would come, though she scarcely knew why; but soon turned the subject to her dress, which she said must all be pretty and new, from a New York *modiste*.

Cora had never been denied any wish, at whatever sacrifice. Her father looked at his only daughter, and sighed to think how ill able he was to grant her every luxury. From her he disguised his real circumstances. Thus far her wants had been few, but he now realized that they must increase, and felt that he could not brook the criticism of her proud relatives, were she to appear as their guest not richly adorned. Through Mr. Clarendon he was made temporarily easy, yet the debt was daily growing larger, and the load often weighed heavily upon his spirits; but this morning his heart was lighter, he felt positive that he should yet see the bulk of his fortune restored. He remembered that Mr. Clarendon had earnestly pressed upon him sums of money without security, which he had hitherto refused—now the temptation to show to the eyes of the world his jewel richly set, overcame his judgment.

He fell into a reverie, and was lost in a dream of ideal prosperity. The bright sunbeams that danced on the wall seemed the gildings of wealth; the crested silver spoons and tankards before him became magnified into massive armorial plate; and the rampant dragon of heraldry, the Bucephalus on which he rode to prosperity and fortune. Could his daughter that instant have appeared before him, with her ringlets powdered and puffed, her form arrayed in old ancestral attire, he would have gallantly handed her a chair, fancying himself the veritable Sir Philip Livingston, and she the Lady Livingston, set free from canvas, in living pride and beauty before him.

But Cora was in another land—one of living fragrance, where springs of feeling welled up and watered it—where flowers blossomed in rose and azure hues, and the music of the spheres carried her rapturously beyond the present to a blissful future.

How unlike she looked, with her soft young face, and rich red lips, to her stately grandam, as she now viewed her—who might once have been as beautiful, but long since had been confined dust.

The clattering produced by the removal of the breakfast things roused the dreaming Colonel, who awoke to the actual world, and his own situation in it.

"But what am I to do without my daughter?" said he, drawing Cora to his side, as she again sought her letter.

A shadow passed over Cora's face: her father saw it, and said, "I have many business matters on hand, and you might be troublesome; so it were better that you were away. I am glad to have you become acquainted with your relatives—a good introduction, too. Besides," continued the Colonel, putting aside the hair from his daughter's cheek, "you will see Mr. Clarendon in town, who will do much for your enjoyment."

Cora turned away, and her father did not see the expression he sought for. The following week, she parted, for the first time, from her parent. She felt a little troubled after making her decision to go; she feared that she would be needed by some one dependent upon her for daily kindness. She cried a little at first; then laughing through her wet lashes, declared herself a simpleton to think she was of so much consequence. The next day, a letter came to Colonel Livingston from Mr. Clarendon, in which he stated his intention of being absent a few days. This was a matter of much regret to the Colonel, as he could not apprise him of Cora's intended visit to New York.

The day at last came for her departure. The parting kiss is given—the loving child is pressed to her father's bosom, and Cora takes leave of her childhood's home, where as yet sorrow had made its impress lightly, as the morning cloud darkens the sky of early June.

The arrival of Cora at the home of her cousin was an event of interest to them both. The one had matured from girlhood into the woman of the world; the other emerged from the child into the spring-like loveliness of seventeen years. They met with characteristic warmth. The greeting, on the part of Fannie, was more composed and elegant than affectionate. True, her welcome abounded in caressing epithets—her embrace would have been perfect in a tableau—not a hair was misplaced, not a fold of her rich dress rumpled, as her white jewelled arms encircled the waist and neck of Cora, and again and again welcomed her rural cousin.

Cora thought less of herself: naturally a lady, art or study could not improve her gentle, fascinating manner. The stylish

city belle was taken by surprise ; she looked for some *gaucherie*, something betraying country breeding, instead of the simple elegance of Cora. She could only account for her refinement in the fact, that she was a "veritable Livingston." She flattered her, until Cora earnestly solicited her to desist, and talk of herself.

"Well, dearest," she said, "you wish to hear of my prospects matrimonial. It is quite natural, my fair coz ; but everything in time. Annie will now show you your room, where you will refresh yourself, and prepare for dinner. Don't hasten down, love. Let me see (she looked at her watch) ; it is yet early. I will accompany you there, and relieve your apprehensions respecting poor Cousin Fannie, who, perhaps, you hear, is going to sacrifice herself on the altar of Mammon. Happiness, in my view, comes, as a matter of course, with luxury. That's the essential, my darling ; and so you will find it, if you live in New York. My arrangements are all made—an establishment quite complete—all elegant simplicity, dear. This, you know, Napoleon considered Josephine's great extravagance—her *penchant* for costly simplicity. Well, I shall have a superb house in the only place where people *live* in New York—the aristocracy. I mean, of course, to shut up when others do, and go to some mosquito swamp until the fashionables come back. Carriage, livery, and *et ceteras*, follow. All is right, Cora, love."

"But you have said nothing of Mr. Sidney"—

"Oh, you will see him, dear. How can you exist among those woods ! I should be so ennuied—geese and horrid cows, I suppose, about you. Poor little dove ! Do you ever walk ?—don't the toads and grasshoppers bite you ? I suppose they run wild like the chickens. I never could abide the country. I have to endure it in July and August, to preserve my looks ; but I nearly die with noises while I am rusticated ; no one would suppose that you had been so reared. How soft and small your hands are ! I thought one must have red hands and large feet, out of town refinements. I am really ignorant, dear, and quite illiberal from education, not from nature, I hope. You will be quite *à la mode*—a huge box has come for you from your dress-maker. Here we are, my love, at your room. I shall be occupied until dinner. Come down when you feel entirely refreshed, and quite composed. It is so frightful to be flushed and flurried. Lie down, my love, and let

Annie bathe your head and eyelids with rose-water, and soothe your nerves. You will find some pellets of Belladonna on your dressing-table ; take a few, dear, and rest yourself, soul and body." Cousin Fannie then took Cora's little hand in both of her own, and touched her forehead gracefully and *composedly*, leaving Cora almost statue-like, from a sudden chill, that excess of sensibility in her cousin had most unaccountably induced.

Cora looked about her beautiful chamber after she was left alone, and seating herself upon a low chair, surveyed the splendor about her. She had visited many of her city relatives while a school-girl in town, but had never been before noticed by this family. She felt, as yet, strange and rather bewildered. A superb Psyche glass reflected her slight figure, arrayed in a dark travelling dress, with hat and veil, which now hung carelessly over her neck, while she held it by the strings and meditated.

Her hair was parted carelessly back, and her look rather bespoke a doubt of her satisfaction. She had not yet seen her aunt, whom she knew was a very fashionable, elegant woman, and the greeting of her cousin had quite overpowered her with its overwhelming cordiality. The luxury about her dazzled and delighted her ; she was fond of it, and seemed formed to enjoy all the elegances of life. She did not know why she felt a little sad. A servant had brought her refreshments on a silver waiter, and had placed delicious perfume upon her toilette table, and she was left either to sleep, rest, or bathe, after her arrival. She thought that her cousin was perfect in her elegant reception of her ; yet she feared that her aunt would chill her with the same extravagant but subdued joy. She had been disappointed in her cousin's briefly expressed views of happiness, and life never seemed to her so vain as when she heard its allurements, its splendor, its gorgeous trappings, spoken of as the desideratum to be gained. Such worship made her think of the heathen's love for gods of wood and stone. But as she looked at her tumbled dress, and caught a view of her disordered hair, she felt that this was no time to moralize, and determined that she would shake off her foolish depression, and find all the enjoyment that she had anticipated. She had come to town, and it was her first winter out, and she felt that she ought to be very happy, and also gratified, as her father said, "to make her *début* with such presentation."

It was certainly delightful to bathe in such luxury, though she did not know that her face came out of the perfumed bath any fresher or sweeter than in the liquid element of her own snowy chamber, or that the splendid mirror in which she arranged her hair, reflected any hues more beautiful than the toilette glass where she had, when a child, brushed her light dancing curls. Still each object on which her eye rested, spoke of wealth, and the novelty pleased her.

Casting her eyes about her, she perceived her dresses arranged for her selection. Here were morning robes, dinner, and evening dresses, with every article of fancy dress to match them, with taste and propriety. Cora was fond of beautiful dress, and fascinated with coloring, whether in gem, flower, or fabric. The arrangement of such hues tastefully, seemed to her akin to the art of painting.

Feeling wearied, she threw herself upon her bed, to await the hour for dressing. As she looked at her wardrobe, and at the well-filled trunk, whose contents her cousin had ordered, the bill of which had been sent to her father—a feeling of uneasiness crept over her—yet she did not know how unable he was to meet the expense—and fortunately Cora soon forgot that there was any bill in the matter, for the articles were bought, and she was to wear them with a happy face.

She had sunk into a light slumber, when a waiting-maid came softly in to assist her to dress, which aroused Cora to the new excitement of making her appearance in the parlor and at dinner.

A selection was soon made, and a rich silk of deep blue fitted to her beautiful figure. Her maid was so charmed by her profusion of soft, golden hair, that in its arrangement she left it partly to the free play of nature. The costliest Mechlin, secured by a diamond pin, contrasted her white throat becomingly, leaving her simply, but richly adorned. The admiring *femme de chambre*, while she drew down the long, sweeping folds of her dress, exclaimed that “it was ten thousand pities to cover her dear little feet.”

On re-entering the parlor, she was received by her elegant, but ceremonious aunt, who touched both her cheeks gracefully, and welcomed her to New-York, as a “sweet young cousin that she had long desired to greet.” Appropriate inquiries were then made for her father’s health, with the hope that she had lacked nothing for her morning’s comfort. Cora timidly

replied, and sunk back on a satin lounge, in admiring awe of her new relations. Her Cousin Fannie was dressed in superb costume, and rose to receive her with the gloved tips of two fingers, while she rapturously murmured in a subdued voice, her delight at her coming—though she secretly wished that she had not been so unnecessarily beautiful.

The aunt and cousin were engrossed (so near the wedding) in private conversation, a part of which was conducted in an undertone, in French, while many civil things were at intervals sent across at Cora, who fortunately had a book of engravings to look at, besides what she received "over the way." But Cora took no exceptions to this exclusiveness, supposing it *style*, only was a little surprised, when on the *entrée* of a rich city friend, that they were never more at leisure, and could converse quite as conveniently in their native tongue, which, after all, would have been as well at first, as Cora's education in New-York had made her familiar with both languages.

Cora, of course, was now more than ever absorbed in her pictures, though she could not help observing how very devoted her new relatives had become to their fashionable friend, considering their many apologies for the private conferences that they were obliged to hold. She had not yet learned to feel herself a country cousin, and poor withal. She did not know that the great pains which her cousin had taken in procuring her wardrobe, was all to gratify "the family" pride, and that it mattered little to them whether the retired Colonel paid the bill at once, or allowed it to be sued. And so the request that Cousin Fannie would procure her "a few fashionable dresses and laces," was received as a *carte blanche* for a splendid and costly wardrobe.

Cora watched her cousin with much interest, and turned from her engravings to the living picture, that was to her eye a study. The latter was dressed with artistic taste, and carried herself without a fault. She had been trained to beautiful attitudes, and seldom changed from the most perfect, under the lapse of five minutes. These tableaux delighted Cora, who had no conception of the time, or pains, with which they were gotten up; or how much they cost, considering the drapery and scenery, for the light of rosy-stained glass, or softer-hued damask, formed no small part of the whole effect produced by the lovers of the fine arts.

But the fashionable and wealthy Miss S. had left, and the

languid and elegant Miss Livingston relieved from all effort. On the whole, the latter was delighted with Cora, as a visitor, she was "so good to amuse herself," and if she was fresh from the country, she was well dressed, and had already a good deal of the Livingston air about her. She thought, too, that she would be convenient to assign some of the quiet, good souls to, for entertainment, who must sometimes be invited, and must be treated with civility; and she was so pretty, she had no doubt, being a visitor of the family, that she would attract some attention, and improve by society. She, therefore, felt very kindly towards Cora, and approached her, intending to tell her "she was looking so charmingly, that she would be the belle of the season." But when she encountered the pure and intelligent gaze of her young cousin's blue eyes, and felt the influence of that unmistakable dignity and grace, which admitted of no condescending approbation, Cousin Fannie's tongue was silenced, and her eyes alone spoke her sincere admiration of one, who most provokingly won her respect, for her unaccountable manners and bearing.

Dinner company was expected, and Cora felt some embarrassment when she knew that all would be strangers to her, and that, if as little pains were taken to converse with her, as had already been manifested, she would have a dull time of it. But a "nice young man" soon came in, with a very slick appearance, and manners to match. Cousin Fannie immediately brought him to Cora, presuming that she would be delighted with such a "genteel little beau," and as he was young and animated, that he would doubtless like her "pretty, well-dressed, little cousin."

But Cora did not despise the "nice little beau," although he in no way interested her, for she found in his unassuming garb and manners, that, like herself, he was among strangers, and ill at ease. Her goodness of heart led her to forget herself in her desire to remove his embarrassment. Her smiles made him happier than during any moments of his first town-visit. Others, too, of more brilliant appearance and conversation, soon sought her, until she was surrounded, much to her cousin's surprise, by a swarm of admirers.

In the meanwhile, Cousin Fannie sat in picturesque repose, behind an exquisite fan, engaging a circle of her more fashionable friends with her elegant phrases and studied conversation; during which a young gentleman entered the parlor with a

privileged air, and seated himself by her side, so near that she was forced to retreat, while she exclaimed, imploringly :

" You incorrigible man ! You have nearly ruined my robe and lace by your abrupt entrance." Then, with the tap of her fan on the shoulder of her favorite, she said, " Behave well for the future, and I will introduce you to my pretty country cousin."

" Oh, I am well satisfied," said the young man, with mock gallantry. " It would be so beautiful to see you sufficiently animated to get provoked, that I like to be brusque and uncouth, to spoil your elegant languor."

" You are positively horrible," she languidly murmured.

" Oh no, not at all," said the young gentleman, commencing to fan the lady so violently that there was infinite danger of misplacing several hairs on her well glossed plaits, while he threatened worse disturbance, unless she pointed out immediately her pretty cousin.

" Oh, seriously you will be disappointed ; she is just out, and quite fresh ; and such a marketable young man as you are, an heir in perspective, can't afford the time to look up country beauties. You are too much in demand in New York society, to go out of it among the rural belles for a wife."

" But I am a country bumpkin myself."

" But well made over, when you choose to play the gentleman. Being just from Europe, too, gives you *éclat*. Three years travel abroad has quite humanized you, excepting when you assume your rough ways to annoy me."

" But I have been all summer looking as rough as a fisher-boy, doing little else but hunting game and sporting a fish pole. But I lost my heart doing it ; and what is worse, fear that I shall never recover it ; so I don't care to see your pretty cousin. By the way, is Colonel Livingston, of Villacora, a relative of yours ?"

" Yes," drawled Cousin Fannie, " he is of our stock."

While she spoke, the attention of the young gentleman was attracted towards a mirror which reflected a group, among which sat Cora Livingston. His rapt gaze excited the curiosity of the elegant belle, who was unaccustomed to neglect, and immediately observed, from the direction of her companion's eyes, that they were fastened on her cousin.

The darkened room bewildered the vision of each, and not until their eyes met did the old friends recognize each other.

Rufus Wilton had been during the winter in town, but the fascinations of the city had never banished from his mind the only being who had ever captivated him. He had heard with pain of her reputed engagement to Mr. Clarendon, and had endeavored to philosophize under the disappointment; still not without hope; he had not yet heard it confirmed by Cora. When he first caught sight of the vision in the mirror, it forcibly reminded him of Cora Livingston, but he knew not of her arrival in town, or that she was coming; moreover, dress had changed the style of her appearance. He had only seen her simple as a wild flower, and though the superb reflection reminded him of her, for a moment he doubted. He was bewildered and fascinated. He tried to listen to the lady beside him, but his eyes and thoughts were only on the mirror, reflecting the image of Cora, whom he could not see. She also saw Wilton, and in the fashionable-looking man with her cousin, scarcely recognized the careless sportsman, with his cap and blouse, as she had mostly seen him on the Hudson. Still the ease and general indifference to his appearance was apparent, and she thought of Rufus Wilton.

To all who knew the latter intimately, it was evident that he had never had the early training of a mother, or the influence of a kind sister. As Uncle Peter said, "Rufe had come up his own way."

But grace so much characterized all he said or did, that he was saved severe criticism, and, having no prim aunt to scold him for his crazy-looking locks, or for an *abandon* of manner, sometimes denounced as reckless, he was rarely unforgiven by the most exacting, for it was Rufus Wilton's way, and no one expected him to be strictly governed by the conventionalities of life. And to those who did not know his engaging qualities, he was the son and heir of the rich Roger Wilton, which was enough to gloss his faults in the eyes of the most ceremonious city belle.

But while we are digressing, he has recognized Cora, and without a word of apology to her cousin, is at her side. But although he had secured the seat envied by her new host of admirers, and one near enough to see the evident emotion his abrupt appearance caused her, a sudden chill has silenced his tongue, and he can only look, and love; the magnetism which enchained him growing momentarily more attractive. The rumor of her engagement to Mr. Clarendon became the burden

that weighed upon his spirits, and as he looked upon her, in her rich city attire, he saw how well she was fitted by nature to adorn the conspicuous station she would fill as his wife. He was overjoyed at her arrival in town, but amazed at the step, he knew not why; perhaps it was because he had not expected it. Unconsciously to herself Cora's sweet face grew thoughtful, and her low voice tremulous; for some invisible agency seemed at work, filling to overflowing the fountain of feeling. She felt how little her life was governed by the external circumstances around her, how much deeper was the inner temple where she garnered her hopes and her fears—how much sweeter was the fairy land she peopled, where one bright image stood prominent. What now to her was this crowd of worshipers around her? She only felt the presence of *one*, and he was near her, the most silent and abstracted. Cousin Fannie observed, that, as she expected, the rich young Wilton regarded her country cousin with indifference, and that, although her novelty and freshness had attracted him, she was, to his taste, insipid.

Still she was puzzled to imagine why he remained so long in her society, for she thought that her young favorite appreciated too well the arts and elegances of society, not to be soon wearied with beautiful simplicity.

The moment that Wilton had so ardently coveted, was now his. He had never seen Cora so unexceptionably lovely, but she still seemed further than ever from him. Here were no rude steps of stone and moss to require his assistance in ascent or descent; her wild freedom was gone, her varying color and downcast eye only revealing his Cora of the dell and arbor.

But stiffness and restraint were so foreign to the nature of each, that Wilton was resolved to extricate himself from his fetters and to approach Cora on more familiar terms.

Leaning forward, while with his eyes fixed on hers, he said, "Miss Cora, let me show you some pictures in the adjoining room. You are too quiet here."

Cora never felt more grateful for the movement, and so easily and quietly was his arm presented, and so unconsciously she went forth from the amazed circle who witnessed the coolness of Wilton's manner, in his monopoly of the charms of the young beauty, that she was standing before "Raphael's Angels," alone with her admirer, before she had recovered from her bewilderment.

The spot which Wilton had selected for a *tête-à-tête*, was one full of choice works of art, where books, statuary, and rare paintings abounded. It was a sweet, retired place, and opened out of the parlor.

"Here is one picture," said Cora's companion, "that I wish you to look at."

She approached it with Wilton. It represented a deserted child, and the scene admirably portrayed, *wrapt* them in mutual delight—pensive rapture, such as the subject of the painting inspired. A beautiful young mother seemed bidding adieu to her sleeping child. The mother rested on her knee by the infant's cradle, while with clasped hands she seemed invoking the blessing of heaven upon it.

"How sad, and yet how beautiful!" said Cora.

Wilton's face was eloquent with feeling. "I would give much for that picture," said he, as he turned away. With a sad smile, he continued, "Truth is stranger than fiction, and there are few tales of romance, few paintings that depict scenes too highly drawn. Life has more pictures of woe than the artist or novelist ever conceived; and yet we are very apt to say, 'How unnatural!' Pardon me, that scene, even on canvas, makes me sad. Will you drive away the impression with one of your old songs? here is a piano."

Cora made no reply, but took up some music, and seated herself at the instrument, when in sweet tones, though not powerfully, she sung some touching words. Wilton turned her leaves, and joined her in the chorus.

"I would now like something, Miss Cora," said Wilton, "that carries me back to our old woods."

Cora turned to an appropriate song, that winged him seemingly on the tones of a seraph, to the heart of the forest, where, among violets and daisied mounds, he sat again at the feet of his woodland fairy. Through several stanzas Cora sung without interruption; she then suddenly stopped, while by placing her fingers upon the leaf, she prevented the turning of another page.

"Why do you stop?" said Wilton, smiling, while he playfully attempted to lift her hand from the music. "It is very sweet;" and from Cora's half-turned face and deepening color, something seemed to have been added in a lower tone.

The leaf was, in the contest, finally turned, when a withered bunch of violets fell upon the carpet. Wilton knew them by

the ribbon with which he had tied them, having taken it from a small key which locked his little treasured silver box, containing the relics which he supposed were once his mother's.

As he took the pressed flowers from the carpet he said, while he sought the blue eyes now averted,

"You have kept the flowers, if you have forgotten the giver."

Cora made no reply, though she took the flowers, laying them again on the pianoforte.

"Tell me why you did not proceed," said Wilton, as his hand rested a moment on the little fingers that laid the music aside.

"Because I did not wish you to see them," said she, confusedly.

"Why not?" said the young man, still seeking the eyes so busy with the flowers on the carpet.

"You must think it very foolish for me to keep them so long."

"That would depend upon the motive which induced you to keep them."

"I don't know why I kept them, excepting that I did not like to throw them away," said Cora.

"But there was something that went with the flowers that you must also keep, and not throw away, Cora," whispered the young man. "I have heard tales of late that have chilled me; I have tried to become indifferent to them, but they still weigh like lead on my mind."

Cora was silent, but her cheek grew pale with feeling, and her lip trembled.

"Tell me, *now*," said he, "before we are interrupted, is your hand, by your own free will, engaged to Mr. Clarendon; I am presuming, perhaps impertinent, but do not misjudge my motive in the inquiry?"

"Oh! no," said Cora, "it is not."

The eyes of Wilton expressed his relief and joy.

"Come then," said he, "to this seat by the window, and give me one answer more."

Beneath folds of crimson damask, on the cushioned seat, there Wilton breathed, in a few words, a confession of his love for the pure, sweet girl of his idolatry. And beneath those heavy silken folds they passed an hour never forgotten through many an after year—through trial and change—through winter and summer, when life had revealed to them many a leaf dyed with

ineffaceable memories. On the full tablet, in burning characters, stood ever written the vows of that morning hour. In the clear depths of those deep, peculiar eyes, Cora read the passionate love of an honest heart, and the yielding, unconscious tenderness of tones that melted on his ear, while they lisped no confession, told him of love, fond as his own. They saw not into futurity—they read not the higher purposes of heaven—they felt not that they required that discipline of the heart which brings its own reward, those teachings which can only be learned from the triumphs of principle, and a self-denying spirit.

Cora had, in the meanwhile, forgotten her father and his prejudices. Mr. Clarendon had also passed from her mind, but the interview of the lovers was doomed to be interrupted. Others, attracted by works of art, were also drawn into the same room, and among them cousin Fannie, who approached her cousin and Wilton with a stately air, while she said to the latter,

“You are my choice for an escort to the dinner-table.”

“Ten thousand pardons, my dear friend,” said Wilton, “but this lady by my side has conferred upon me that honor, and accepted me as her cavalier. Had I not been thus captivated, I had supposed Miss Fannie Livingston entirely out of my reach.”

“A very ingenious escape,” said the elegant, unruffled Fannie. “It was only from benevolence that I sought you, but am glad that my sweet coz is so fortunate. If you take her to dinner, you will, of course take her under your charge. I shall allow you no release.”

Cousin Fannie turned, while Cora’s cheek burned with humiliation. She was then to be considered “a burden to be taken care of compassionately” among this circle of fashionable people.

“Would that the lease was through life,” murmured Wilton, while, with Cora on his arm, he followed to the dining-room, among the crowd of guests.

As they passed into the dining-room, Cora whispered to her cousin her desire to see Mr. Sidney—her betrothed.

“He was out late last night, my love, and is not up yet;” then with a whisper, she said, “his habits are peculiar, dear, quite French; he has been much abroad, and consequently we indulge his foreign tastes.”

"Is he ill?" said Cora.

"Oh, no, my white clover, he can't bear dissipation, as well as when younger." Cora made no reply, and they passed on to dinner. Wilton and Cora were seated together, and strange as it may appear to some, had they been called upon for an account of the bill of fare, not a dish of it could have been remembered by either; and although Wilton went mechanically through with all the ceremonies of the occasion, he would have preferred bodily starvation behind the "crimson curtain," to a feast that the gods might have envied. And Cora was too near, much too near, the sound of a voice sweeter to her ear than music e'er breathed, to know either the succession of courses, or their richness. Excitement had flushed her cheek with a shade more of the rose than her cousin thought becoming; but then it seemed natural to the polished lady of society, that Cora should be somewhat embarrassed in a circle so refined and distinguished. She almost expected her to commit some unpardonable blunder; but to her amazement Cora seemed quietly at home, and lacked none of that *repose* of manner, which, to her eye, made up the finished lady. Yet she thought she must be disconcerted, else why her rising color?—her neglect of the most delicious viands?—her want of appreciation of delicacies and luscious fruits that a peer of England might have envied for his guests? Miss Fannie had watched her cousin narrowly, with a quiet, scrutinizing gaze, that seemed not to look, yet left nothing unseen. She wished to see in what lay the unexpected success of the young *débutante*. Why had she fascinated the most fastidious? and more than all, the rich, independent, careless young Wilton, so indifferent as he had ever been to the most elegant belles of the season. Cousin Fannie, with all her conceded shrewdness and acquaintance with the world, was puzzled. And we ask our readers why? Was there more refinement in the education of the one, than of the other? Had the beautiful green earth, with its flowers, its dew-gemmed fields, its silvery brooks, and "Heaven-kissing hills," made less elevated the tone of mind in the simple country girl?—in the tranquilizing influences of such a religion as the birds, the sky, the glorious waves had taught her, was there less sublimity of thought, such as carries the heart to "nature's God," inculcated, than in the exquisite training and artificial grace that the world-polished lady receives, in

that court whose goddess numbers her millions? How many glorious teachings are there to be learned that the heart can only drink from this rich beautiful source, and how unfinished is the most scholastic-taught mind, without the reading of that book which unites the creature with his great Creator.

Beautiful, we acknowledge, the elegance, the refined suavity of manner, that forbids the utterance of the ungente word, the commission of the uncourteous act, that makes all rough edges smooth in this unharmonious world; but let sincerity, charity, and true humility of spirit, like the under current of smooth waters, course harmlessly, without treachery beneath—let not the refined simplicity of the country girl be thought ill-bred, and deserving of well-disguised contempt; be not hasty, ye polished, aye, charming city belles, as with self-possessed elegance you sweep by the unassuming novice; for beneath the untasteful, unfashionable robe, the rustic cottage bonnet, you may find another Cora Livingston.

The attention which Cora received, enhanced much the respect of her cousin and aunt, and as the former was so soon to be married, her beauty and attractions excited not the same envy that they would otherwise have done.

After dinner, Cousin Fannie took a seat by Cora, and drew her politely into conversation, which turned upon the great matter of present interest to the former—her expected nuptials.

"Allow me to ask you, Cousin Fannie," said Cora, "something of your intended tour."

"We shall travel south, and pass the winter in New Orleans and Havana, and in the spring go to Niagara and the watering places—but not to sojourn at the Falls long—the noise of water affects me unpleasantly."

"Oh, I should be delighted to go there!" said Cora.

"Very sweet, dearest, if Mr. Sidney was younger"—

"Is he much your senior, Fannie?"

"My dear love, men do not grow old in New York any more than the women; he is as young, they say, as he was thirty years ago; he enjoys his club and suppers, as much as I do the opera and *soirées*. He never makes a *faux pas* unless (Fannie slightly laughed) he drops his cane."

Cora looked up with surprise, which, her cousin thought, betrayed freshness, that society would probably amend. She

contrasted Rufus Wilton with this imagined individual, so soon to be the husband of her elegant cousin. Her countenance betrayed more than she intended. Fannie was not unobservant, but said nothing for several minutes ; then exclaimed,

" You look amazed, my coz, at my shocking heartlessness ; but I quite forgive you, you are so *naïve*. I suppose that you now fancy my intended *sposa* to be superannuated. How he would be amused ! No, no, dear ; he is in excellent preservation. His hair ! Byron could not have idealized a hero's more perfect ; and his teeth are every one a pearl. Indeed, my dear, he is unexceptionable. I sometimes laugh at poor Sidney, but I have a high respect for him ; we are quite attached. I must show you my *superbe trousseau*. He is so liberal ! ' Better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave.' "

Cora wondered if it was necessary to be either.

That the absent gentleman, so soon to be united to the elegant belle, liked *repose*, was apparent to the company, who curiously and anxiously awaited his coming. He had arrived recently from abroad, and had since taken up his abode in the family of his affianced bride.

His delay somewhat disturbed the composure of his intended wife, though the ripple over the serene surface of her mind was scarcely discernible. She, however, deemed it proper to have him reminded of the hour. Dinner was now over, and the time for dressing had arrived. A messenger was accordingly sent to the door of Mr. Sidney's apartment, who informed him that " it was late, and that Miss Livingston hoped that he was not ill. "

" Come in, " cried a grum, but sleepy voice, within. " Call my valet, and bring me coffee and cigars. Say to Miss Livingston, with my respects, that I came home at six this morning—took an opium pill—quietus took effect—will be soon ready. Bring me my wig—have slept too long—uncork that Seidlitz—give me my watch—an early start this for a man on the road to matrimony. "

The servant obeyed orders, which message satisfied the intended bride.

" Mr. Sidney is very peculiar, mamma ! " said she. Mamma shrugged her shoulders, and retired to her dressing-room.

The wedding party have assembled—the marriage ceremony is over, and the fashionable Miss Livingston has already merged into the wealthy Mrs. Sidney, of — Place. And truly had Cousin Fannie implied, rather than said, that her betrothed was well *got up*. The ceremony was performed in the presence of a few guests; when the party afterwards congregated to express their congratulations, and look out more especially for their own enjoyment.

The attire of the bride was magnificent, and her whole appearance elegant. She was taller than her husband, and seemed formed for quiet, commanding sway. The effect of the “*quietus*” seemed still over the groom, his eyes looking swollen and red; which his bride regretted, deeming his appearance otherwise unexceptionable.

But no one attributed his flushed lids to excess of sensibility, and there were few that noticed them at all. He had consulted several oculists on the watery appearance of his eyes, who impertinently attributed their increasing humidity to old age; which induced him to despise the profession, calling the operators all quacks. He knew of but one remedy, and that was to wear glasses—near-sighted ones, of course.

By the side of the bride stood Cora, in a dress of silver lace, ornamented with jewelled butterflies, which likewise glittered in gossamer beauty on one side of her head. The wings were formed of silver web, fragile and beautiful. Her dress was delicate and pure, like the beauty it adorned.

A fashionable beau stood as groomsman by her side. Cora attracted universal admiration. “Who is that lovely creature?” was the general murmur, as she glided through the crowded saloon. “She has the wings of a Peri,” said another, as she floated in the dance; but Rufus Wilton’s admiration was silent.

Admirers came swarming around her; while to other inquiries was added, aside, “Is she rich as well as beautiful?”

“If she is wealthy, Rufus Wilton is poor,” was the reply. Her name was thus associated with his by strangers, who knew naught of their love, but more of the lawsuit of their parents.

“Mr. Clarendon is late this evening,” said Mrs. Livingston to a guest near her. “His absence is as much felt, as his presence is enjoyed.” But she soon added, “Ah! there he is, with Madame Delano! Do you think her handsome, Mrs. Prig?”

“Quite the reverse,” replied the lady, a short, fat woman,

with elevated eyebrows, and a nose and mouth which disclaimed companionship; one being aspiring, and the other drawn down at the corners. "Her French gibberish," she continued, "is intolerable. She seems irresistible to the gentlemen, however. Even Mr. Prig, who hasn't danced these ten years, was actually deluded into a gallopade with her ladyship last night; she wheedled him, as she does the rest of the men, with her coquetish airs. I told him that he might be in a more dignified position; but he seemed so careless about my advice, that I thought I shouldn't waste my breath in the argument. Ha! ha! perhaps he thinks I'm jealous."

"Why don't you flirt with the Captain? he does not seem to harmonize with all his wife's notions."

"Harmonize with a magpie! She can't *parlez-vous* over me. Well, the strongest-minded men will have their weaknesses, but I won't uphold any one, if I censure my husband, in encouraging flirts. Why, this woman has no more stability than a bottle of her French essence."

"A chance, then, of her evaporating, is there not, Mrs. Prig?"

"She's inflated enough to soar, but the balloon must be well-manned that she sails in."

"Does the Alderman admire her?"

"No, indeed, he likes to look at her as one does at a whizzing fire rocket. It is a relief to a rational mind to turn from her to Miss Dumpsey. What a wife she would make a retired gentleman that could appreciate her. The Dumpsey family were always respectable, and Nancy was always tidy. There must be some radical defect in the men as well as in these Delilah women. I wonder where Mr. Prig is; but it's of no use for me to watch him."

Mrs. Prig stretched her neck, as well as its length would admit, behind Mrs. Livingston, but drew it in again.

"You are ceremonious this evening," said the hostess to Madame Delano, as she approached on the arm of Mr. Clarendon, to greet her.

"A *soirée* at Madame L.'s—*premier engagement*," lisped the graceful beauty.

"Shall we see Captain Delano, to-night?" said Mrs. Livingston politely, while she turned her eyes in a sideways glance to Mrs. Prig.

"*Ah! non, le pauvre Capitaine! il est très fatigué.*"

After a voluble chat respecting the bride and her newly-made husband, Madame Delano turned from Mrs. Livingston to Mr. Clarendon, and with some low whisper, drew forth the following reply.

"*Partons avec vous.*" The words were accompanied with a look which occasioned extra fan-fluttering.

"*Le pauvre Capitaine !*" said Mrs. Prig as she turned, "I should think he'd be *très fatigué* with such a *syllabub* of a wife."

"She dresses well," said Mrs. Livingston, who was too well-bred to censure her guests, not objecting to listening to the criticisms of others.

"Yes, as if we were all admirers of undraped Venuses ; well, she has a *virtuoso* in Clarendon. I like simplicity in dress, and enough of it. He admires, of course, *objets de vertu.*"

"Ah ! Mrs. Prig, you are too satirical," said Mrs. Livingston, playfully. "Society must have its varieties ; and she, you know, has been recently abroad, to '*chère Paris.*'"

"Well, I don't mean to be severe, Mrs. Livingston, but what is to become of the morals of our country women, when a scent bag like this is to swallow"—

"The whole common council," said Mrs. Livingston, laughing.

"No, not that—I'm not jealous—not a bit. Do look !" Mrs. Prig continued, with an affected smile, "my husband is giving my first hyacinths to Frenchy ! How Miss Dumpsey is neglected by the gentlemen—she's sterling—nothing flimsy about her." The alderman was now within reach of his anxious wife. With an affectionate grasp of his arm, she nervously exclaimed in an undertone :—"Perhaps you'd better go to the green-house another time for hyacinths—I don't raise bulbs, I can tell you, for women of such character. Now if you wish to please me, you will attend some to Nancy Dumpsey—she's a cousin, too, of my uncle's first wife. I could honestly deed *her* to you, soul and body, for a mother to my children, after I am dead and gone, and that will soon be," Mrs. Prig drew now down her mouth corners, still further from her upward nose, "if you go on as you now do."

"I will certainly entertain Miss Dumpsey on your account," said the alderman, pulling down his waistcoat. "Shall I also," he continued, shaking his rubicund visage and portly figure, "inform her of the honor you intend her ?"

"You'd better wait perhaps till you are really bereft. If I

wasn't in a party, I'd give you a piece of my mind, but one has to play hypocrite here."

This *tête-à-tête* was carried on in a subdued, but energetic undertone on the part of the lady, and an assumed obsequiousness on the part of the gentleman, whose eyes seemed wandering for an opening in the door-way.

The approach of a lady to the lounge where the conjugal pair sat, terminated the conversation between the alderman and his wife.

"I don't like such devotion to one's wife in company," said she playfully. "Come, Mr. Prig, there is a stranger here, a very lovely woman that I wish you to entertain awhile—so much for a reputation for agreeability."

"Who is the lady?" said Mrs. Prig, trying to look amiable.

"A widow, from Philadelphia, I believe. A Mrs. Linden."

"That lady in the corner, with a strait nose? I don't approve of widows. She is talking now to young Wilton, courting him up, I dare say—old enough to be his mother, I'll be bound. It's another thing, when widows are widows (indeed.)"

"Mrs. Linden is quite retiring and certainly a harmless acquaintance," replied the lady.

"I hope you haven't thought that I consider her dangerous," said the alderman, good naturedly.

"I don't suppose you do," interposed Mrs. Prig; "and I don't suppose she is. I never heard of her, anyway. Is her hair curled?"

"No—she wears a cap."

"Widow's caps! All a farce, nothing but coquetry about them; and as for curls, they are an abomination. I see nothing to call them out of retirement, unless they want the fresh air, and then there are side streets enough. To see the veils on Broadway, one would think there was a funeral about one o'clock. But I don't mean to be severe, I know that there are those that keep sober at home, not looking out for another chance. Well, Mrs. Ross, I am not going to try to keep the alderman from any kind of a trap. I have done that long ago. Go, if you wish to, and I suppose you do."

Mrs. Ross and the alderman disappeared, when Mrs. Prig accosted Miss Ironsides with, "How comes on the Womens' Rights Convention? I do hope that you will come out strong on the sufferings of our sex. This being put down, and not allowed a voice in any assembly, is more than ought to be

endured. I only wish the men had to take care of babies one month, and see if they'd feel so fine out in company. Do you know that Mrs. Linden? How quakerfied she looks! Affectation of simplicity. I thought it was expected that people would dress some at weddings.

"I don't know her," said Miss Ironsides. "Intellectual faculties small, I observe—no preponderance of self-esteem—costume effeminate," she now pulled up her dickey, "still not incapable, if roused, to trample upon the oppressor that insults by defiance of woman's rights, the sex to which she belongs. May God strengthen our defenders, and lengthen the days of our strong-minded sisterhood."

"And lengthen their petticoats," added Mrs. Prig. "If I wasn't short, and rather *en bon pointish*, I would try pants; but all figures don't become them, besides, I don't approve of two pair in a family. Prig and I quarrel enough now; but I do think that woman's *voice* should, on no public or private occasion, ever be checked. I always read all I see on 'Female Influence,' and if ever I feel like laying the oppressor low, it is when election day comes, and Prig gets a ticket sent him, with all the *managers'* names. All I hear about what he's seen at the polls, comes through a windpipe of ale."

"The day may come," said Miss Ironsides, with solemnity, "when these polls of chicanery, iniquity and ignominy, will become poles of liberty, where the flag of *woman* will wave triumphant; and when, on pedestals of bronze, the names of female politicians shall shine in letters of *brass*, commemorating the heroism of their brave aspirants for unshackled freedom. Like the downfall of Robespierre, the tyrant *man*, will be chained"—

"It wasn't Robert Spear, Miss Ironsides, that was chained," interposed Mrs. Prig, "it was the devil that was to be bound a thousand years; that may mean *man* typically, but I didn't mean to interrupt you, I seldom lecture any one but Prig—go on."

"Excuse me," said Miss Ironsides, with dignity, who was averse to being "put out," and who had a growing contempt for the "intellect" of her companion, since she turned the French tyrant into a common individual. "But I must say, Mrs. Prig, that I could, with a willing mind, a strong heart, and with gigantic strides, like a female Napoleon, walk into the courts of our immoral halls of legislation, and with a *coup d'état*

that should awaken the dying energies of our too feeble sex, fetter the male hydras that bar us from free admission into our natural sphere of action, and, if necessary, *imprison* them, while in our own hands, we take the reins of government. My friend, we are now sleeping, but the day will come when the daughters of America will awake in a body to a sense of their wrongs."

"If I was as tall as you," said Mrs. Prig, who had listened like one overpowered, "I should certainly preach."

Miss Ironsides acknowledged the compliment, with an oppressed look, upon which Mrs. Prig offered her her fan, which was declined, Miss Ironsides having a small cane attached to her wrist, as an emblem of her masculine aspirations. Mrs. Prig wondered if Mr. Prig would stand more in fear of her if she carried one.

At that moment, the attention of the lady was attracted towards Miss Sally Sapp, who was gallanted by Uncle Peter to the party.

"That must be the heiress from Sapp Dingle," rattled Mrs. Prig. "I never look at city fashionables in company; but these foreign importations take my eye—do see her, covered with fire-flies! as I live, they are live bugs! with lightning eyes! how she glitters! she's a real popinjay—they say she keeps parrots and monkeys. Do see Uncle Peter Wilton making his gyrations round her! she's seated now, lazy, I'll warrant—it can't be that the old bachelor would like to catch my lady-bug. Uncle Peter is a clever man; I hope he won't be taken in by such fandangoes."

"She will avail little, I should think, in the way of ennobling her sex," replied Miss Ironsides. "What are jewels when even toads are said to wear them! When will our sex learn the value of *mind*?" Overcome with feeling, Miss Ironsides arranged her sleeve buttons, and joined a male coterie of which she was one of the committee, to "reform abuses," leaving Mrs. Prig to look up other company.

In the meanwhile, in a small room adjoining the saloon, filled with works of art, luxurious seats, and beautiful flowers, sat Mr. Clarendon and Madame Delano. He had plucked from the shrubs around him a bouquet, and was now leaning towards his companion, who languished on a lounge, while he poetized about his offering, comparing her to the most beautiful.

The charms so lavishly displayed were flatteringly extolled

in her own alluring French, severely as even his liberal taste condemned the garish display. They sat opposite a mirror in which they were reflected in the outer room, where Wilton and Cora stood. Mr. Clarendon had not heard of Cora's visit in town, having himself just returned, and since his entrance, been constantly devoted to the French belle.

With a languid smile she inquired "If he had seen the young bridesmaid that all were admiring."

"I have not," said Mr. Clarendon. "I must be avaricious indeed to desire to look further. Is she a Circassian maiden, or an houri of fabled land, that I should wander from my present orbit?"

Madame was not lacking in words for a graceful, coquettish reply, which ended in comparing her companion to Swedenborg, whom, she said, "believed in the presence of angels about him."

"But I see but *one*," was the gallant reply.

"*Vous êtes bien flatteur*," answered the flattered beauty. "Ah! *Monsieur*, you make courtier in *la belle France*—this country—shocking *domestique*. *Le Capitaine est horriblement Américain*."

"Teach him," said Clarendon, "that *L'amour sourit à la terre*," while he laid his hand on the pretty arm near him.

"Ah, *prenez garde!*" cried the latter, with affected timidity, giving Mr. Clarendon a playful tap of her fan, while she veiled her brilliant eyes with her hand.

The crowd was now proceeding to the supper-room. The buzz of the moving throng deafened all private communications which were undisturbed by observation, if the mutual devotion of Mr. Clarendon and Madame Delano had not passed unheeded by Cora and Wilton.

The former was unmindful of the eyes that had witnessed the smiles of the lady, and his seeming adoration of the noted belle. Cora had been surrounded during the evening by admirers, but Wilton's jealous eye soon discovered that her wandering look was vague and dreamy, until it rested timidly on his own. Mr. Clarendon was apparently, to the careless observer, showing some prints to his companion. The pictures lay open before him; his attention was not directed to them, but fell, with obsequious admiration, upon her who held them. Neither seemed wearied of their retirement. Music and dancing made the scene in the outer rooms gay, but Mr. Claren-

don's heart and soul seemed fixed upon the coquette whose smiles he courted, and whose eyes flashed with alternate fire and softness, as she listened to his conversation.

Cora was startled, but not pained. She thought that he had sought some new object of preference, and a weight was lifted from her mind. Her spirits rose with the idea, and she soon remarked to Wilton "that his own observation could furnish a reply to some questions that he had asked her—that he need only look for an answer in the devotion of the pair in the ante-room."

"That is a married lady, Cora, with Mr. Clarendon," said Wilton.

"Ah! some relative, perhaps," answered Cora, as she turned away, and with Wilton proceeded towards the supper-room.

She had not been long at the refreshment table before Mr. Clarendon appeared, having resigned his companion to another. Looking for the first time about him, he caught a view of Cora in her beautiful array. He was both delighted and chagrined. For a moment he stood ravished with her exceeding loveliness, and watched the expression of her face, and noticed that upon Wilton fell her sweetest, most winning smiles. She had been almost constantly in his thoughts, and he would not have exchanged one look from her pure soul-lit eyes for the love of a score of heartless married fiats.

To amuse an idle hour he might dally in their frivolous society, but contrasted with that of Cora, void and vain seemed the recent moments which he had passed in the conservatory.

With inexpressible annoyance he witnessed the devotion she received from Wilton.

Without delay, he hastened towards her, expressing his delight and surprise to see her in town—"I came so late," he said, "that I have not before seen you—and are you the bridesmaid of whom I have heard so much? How could you let me remain in ignorance of your presence so long?—My dear Cora, I have much to say to you—take my arm, Mr. Wilton will certainly excuse you."

Wilton bowed coldly, and still remained by the side of Cora, and as the latter politely declined his invitation, Mr. Clarendon was forced to abandon the hope of a private interview, but not long. Mr. Wilton was accosted by a lady, who proposed to present him to one of his old friends, who wished to speak with him. He accordingly apologized to Cora, and left

her reluctantly, when Mr. Clarendon soon joined her. In a retired corner, seated by a sofa table, he found his former valuable acquaintance, Mrs. Linden; one who had often crossed his path, when a boy, and during his college life had sought him out among the students, to bestow upon him such kindnesses as he could never forget. One occasion, during a severe illness, he never ceased to remember with gratitude; how she had watched day and night by his bed-side, bestowing upon him all those tender attentions so peculiarly grateful to the sick, lonely, and homeless student;—she had told him, too, that she had known his mother as a child, and in her girlhood, and evinced much knowledge of her after history, which enhanced his interest in his once devoted friend.

Why the governess and friend of Flora Islington should be at this gay wedding, among the fashionable and worldly, we must now explain. She had also stood in the same relation to Fannie Livingston, as to Flora, and the promise the pupil then made to her favorite instructress, was fulfilled, and an invitation was sent her to be present at her bridal; but why a strong motive urged her to accept it, she did not reveal. Flora assisted her to array herself in her deep black dress, relieved only by a fold of tulle lace about her throat, and adjusted the simple lace cap over her still beautiful hair, and asked her no question. Her friend said that she was going to a wedding, and Flora performed her task, somewhat paler, but silently.

Mrs. Linden was not one to prepossess strangers. Her manners were cold, almost haughty. Few ever awoke a smile on her countenance; but now, as Rufus Wilton approached her, one of angelic sweetness played about her mouth. She had still much beauty, but was colorless as marble—the faint red on her lip, mostly denoting the hue of health, though her complexion was as purely white as in her girlhood. Her features were classical, her face oval, and the hair visible beneath her Mary Stuart cap, yet unsilvered, of a dark chestnut brown. Her form was tall and full, and the expression of mingled haughtiness, and sadness, which characterized her appearance, while it repelled, still awoke an interest in the beholder.

As Wilton approached her, she gave him her hand, and called him to a seat near her. Her eyes swam with earnest

feeling, and a faint, very faint color came for a moment and settled upon her cheek, as she spoke.

"We have not met," said she, "since you have returned from Europe, but you have not forgotten your old college and boyhood friend."

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

"Oh, no," said Wilton, "I have often, very often thought of you, and had I known where you were, while I was in Europe, I should have written to you. You have been always so good to me, and it seems sometimes that you have a mysterious influence over my fate. I feel that I owe my life to you; who else would have nursed me when I was so ill in my college days. Where have you been since?—and where do you now live!"

"I have sought the occupation of governess for the past three years, but have of late lived in an obscure street in this city, where, with one of my old pupils, I lead a secluded life. I yesterday called upon my old friend Fannie, and she invited me here to-night. Rufus, need I tell you, that *you* were the magnet. I came here to meet you. I wished to give you my address. You will come and see me." The rare smile so inexpressibly sweet, effecting so peculiar a change, now passed over her face.

Young Wilton felt little inclined to resist the persuasive invitation. Since his first and early acquaintance with Mrs. Linden, he had felt for her a peculiar and tender friendship.

When a boy at school, the beautiful young widow, with her mournful dress, and pale, sad face, had ever excited his interest, and her invitations to visit her on holidays and at leisure hours were always accepted. He even then loved to feel her soft, white fingers in his hair, and to have her gently arrange his collar or cambric frill, and never denied her the parting kiss she seemed to crave—and when in college, he again met her, paler and more subdued than of old, she was still welcome to his sight; for like a mother, or an older sister, she seemed ever awake to his personal comfort, and often told him that she could not do too much for the child of his mother. Rosa Neville, she said, she had known and loved as well as her own soul; and she had vowed that *her* child should be to her dear as one of her own, had she been blessed with a son.

"Will you go with me to the supper-room," said Wilton, offering his arm to Mrs. Linden. "You have been in the shade all the evening. Why does this quiet corner fascinate you?"

"I have seen the bride," said Mrs. Linden, "and you, my dear Rufus. You cannot imagine the zest for enjoyment past, cannot fancy that the murmur of this gay throng makes me think of the wild music of the sea—dashing inspiring melody to one who watches its beautiful surges from a sunny harbor—but like the roar of turbulent waves to the shipwrecked. So it come to one who finds no peace in its tumult. Once it had its fascinations, and I watched the crowd with some amusement. I see that one lovely creature has touched your heart, Rufus."

"Are you so discerning? You approve of my taste, I trust."

"Yes, Rufus, I admire her; but there are many beautiful roses in one garden, and is it not folly for all to seek to wear the same?"

"Look at her now," continued Wilton, enthusiastically. "You, of course, know her name. Is it mere physical beauty that charms one in Cora Livingston? It seems to me something beyond that. Have you never, in looking at a star, felt that its sparkling brilliancy constituted no part of the attraction which made you wonder and gaze with intensity into its radiance?—but that something beyond that entranced you—the sublimity of the wonderful creation that seemed to give it effulgence. So, my dear friend, does this sweet girl inspire me. It is her spirit shining through, that magnetizes me."

"Rufus, guard your heart, steel it until you are sure hers wears no other impress. Rumor assigns her to another; *he* is now with her."

"Do you know him, Mrs. Linden?" said Wilton; "Mr. Clarendon?"

"Yes, Rufus; and I implore you not to tread in his path, unless you are sure of winning—if so, wrest from him your own."

"Is he so powerful," said Wilton, deridingly, "that one should fear him as a rival?"

"A man without principle, without conscience, without honor, is always to be feared."

"You are a woman—you have watched him with Cora. Do you think he loves her?"

"No; there is but one being that he loves."

"Who is that?"

"Himself. Ambition is his ruling passion, and worldly pride feeds it, and goads him on to any soulless pursuit. I do not deny his susceptibility to woman's charms; but he can nurse a secret passion for one, and feign, aye, almost make himself believe, he loves another. What to him is the sacrifice of a woman's heart? What does he know of its whole-souled truth and tenderness? He values it not, excepting as the tenement where he lies enshrined—an idol and a god. Her beauty he would appropriate, possess; but her heart, ruthlessly crush."

"You speak feelingly, Mrs. Linden, and judge him more harshly than I could have done."

"I would not judge harshly, but my nature cannot nourish a tame sentiment."

"This rumor is absurd—he is too old for the supposition." As Wilton spoke, his eyes followed Cora and Mr. Clarendon, with no easy sensations.

"How long do you remain in town?" inquired Mrs. Linden.

"Until spring," said he. "The country is dull now, and you know that I have little to call me home. How I envy those who have sisters! I dare not dwell on the loss of a mother. Oh! my dear friend, that you knew her, once existed in her presence, is to me inexpressibly consoling."

Mrs. Linden's eyes moistened: she did not continue the subject, but spoke of some visits which she had that day made to some poor families known to them both.

"How little you are known by those who are not intimately acquainted with you, my dear friend! You, who are called so cold and haughty, to spend so much of your time in the abodes of the poor and suffering!"

"Why should I not? I am retired from the bustle and fever of the world; sorrow has deprived me of all relish for its enjoyments; yet I have a stimulus for which to live." The soft, serene smile now passed from the lips of Mrs. Linden, and resolution, almost scorn, sat on her brow.

Mrs. Linden was deeply interesting to Rufus Wilton; he lingered long, when with her, in rapt attention to her conversation. Her singularity was impressive to one to whom she

opened her heart ; but to the stranger who studied her physiognomy, she was like a marble statue, seen by the grey of evening. Her eyes were dark and flashing, when awakened by feeling, which, contrasted with her pale features, gave spirituality to her expression.

Sometimes, her colorless face impressed him with the idea that she was ill. He now inquired "if she was indisposed."

"Not in the least," she said. The scornful look disappeared, and a sweet smile for an instant brightened her face. It came and went like lightning over a dark sky.

"You cannot imagine," said she, "that my bloom was once as rich as that of the young beauty we discussed—that my laugh and tones were gaiety itself. Morning, Rufus, has faded with me into night ; but I feel that that night is not endless. There is a dawn for me, and that day will break in this world. There is a God of justice as well as of mercy. Ah ! my dear Rufus, I bewilder you. It is enough for you to know that I have been wronged. We have talked a long time, and I fear that I have saddened you. My home shall not so affect you ; it shall be made cheerful for you. Now, good night."

She pressed the hand of Wilton, and passed suddenly away. He remained long in the retired seat where she left him—he longed to follow her. She was as interesting as mysterious to him. He forgot Cora, and saw nothing but the dark, loving eyes that had lingered so intently upon his own—the fascination that ever left, in its absence, its holy, purifying spell. He felt, as he had sometimes done when beneath a midnight sky, an overwhelming sense of beauty, sublimity, and mystery.

Mr. Clarendon, during this interview, had been devoting himself to Cora. He admired her simplicity, her real, or assumed dignity, and watched jealously the admiration she excited. In the same breath, he expressed his happiness to see her in town, and then reproached her for leaving her country home, where, he said, "the violets kept fresh, and wild flowers their dew."

"Your father," he continued, "would give your old grandam's picture to see you to-night ; he would say you show your blood, in spite of maiden blushes. But I would as soon trust a diamond among thieves. What do you think of your cousin's marriage ?"

"Oh ! I trust she will be happy," said Cora. "I am no judge of her prospects. She is always so serene, that I cannot

imagine her otherwise. She has lived in luxury, and I suppose wealth is essential to her happiness."

"What would you think, Cora, of Mr. Sidney for a husband?"

"What a question, Mr. Clarendon!" said Cora, half-smiling. "You are trying to make me commit myself on a most delicate point. But one would think that all drank the elixir of life here—every one looks young. It must be this enchanting light. Who is that lady with Mr. Wilton, in the opposite room?"

"Ah! jealous, Miss Cora? He seems deeply interested. I do not know the lady, excepting as a wandering personage—a mysterious individual that claims no home or relatives. I would not advise you to seek her acquaintance, fascinating as she may be to your friend."

"She looks very lovely," said Cora, "but too sad in her weeds for this gay scene."

"Her dress is certainly woeful. Ask Wilton if she plays the dolorous to him. I don't know, but suppose she is

'An *ignis fatuus* that bewitches,
And leads men into pools and ditches.'

"I am sure she could do no wrong," said Cora.

"I am fearless of her wiles; so I will not interfere with Mr. Wilton on this ground. *On another*," he whispered, "I should be more reluctant to yield.

"My dear Cora (he spoke lower), by your father's permission, I shall watch over you; your enjoyment, while in town, it shall be my aim to promote. Your confidence is all I ask. Others may flatter you; I am your best friend; rely on me, Cora, and remember your father's aversion to Rufus Wilton. Let me warn you in time."

Cora's cheek burned with vexation. She drew herself proudly up, and said,

"I need no warning." Consciousness then overwhelmed her; tears came into her eyes, and she turned away, hiding her face with her fan.

"Am I *too late*, Cora?"

"Is this a place to question me? If you are appointed my guardian, I wish you would delay your inquiries and spare"—

"My advice. I will. Walk with me, and forget my offi-

ciousness. There is a sweet spot, where we may talk, in the conservatory."

"Yes, and you have enjoyed it to-night," said Cora, with significance.

Clarendon was amazed—stung by her allusion. Policy forbade him to notice it. He thought her jealous. The idea flattered him. He knew that she had no acquaintance with Madame Delano, and therefore led her onward. Cora passively followed. She cast her eyes towards the retired corner where Wilton had sat with Mrs. Linden. The lady had now gone. He was alone, viewing the crowd. Her look was not unobserved. He hastened towards her, and found her with a flushed cheek and quivering lip, listening to the conversation of Mr. Clarendon.

Unhesitatingly he approached her, and reminded her of her engagement to waltz with him.

"That engagement I beg leave to contest," said Mr. Clarendon, with more spirit than courtesy.

"A question Miss Livingston will decide," said Wilton, coolly. Cora took the arm of the latter, saying, in a tone which Mr. Clarendon understood,

"You cannot contest a *premier engagement*."

Mr. Clarendon was much annoyed. Cora had assumed a new character in his eyes; he had deemed her passive, and partially under his control. She had now defied him, and in the language of Madame Delano, thrust upon him what he deemed an unpardonable defence of her course. With a cold bow he left her, not deigning to notice Wilton.

Mr. Clarendon did not again intrude himself upon Cora. The remainder of the evening she was engrossed by Wilton. His presence dissipated her momentary fears, and with happiness on her beautiful face, she wandered from room to room, through the many brilliant apartments and lighted halls thronged with guests, some dancing, some chatting and flirting, and more, with masked faces, sighing over the emptiness of the cup they drank. In unsympathizing austerity the satiated guest too lingers in the pleasure-seeking saloon, looking upon the bright winged revellers that (like as a boy chases the painted insect), he has once gaily pursued, but now views in a corner, rapt in his own dreams.

Again Cora and Wilton sought the seat where, beneath the folds of the crimson curtain, they had passed an hour of un-

alloyed happiness. But the parting good night came : reluctantly the soft words fell from lips too loth to utter them. As Cora breathed her night's farewell, a half-blown rose fell from her bosom. Wilton raised it ; unconsciously he held it to his lips. He did not return it. It seemed a part of her who had worn it.

And then the morning came—to Cora a day of joyous brightness. No remembrances saddened her heart ; all that belongs to the poetry, the romance of girlhood, had been stirred up, and brilliant was the many-hued glass through which she looked back upon the last night's festivity. The crowd, the lights, the music, had cast their charm over the fairy scene, while grace and beauty floated in a giddy whirl before her still enraptured vision. That it had been a wedding occasioned her no solemn, no thrilling emotions. But who that have pledged the same holy vows, and at the same sacred altar given up their hearts' faith, as their being, until death, into the keeping of another—but look upon the rite which sealed their own fate with joy or sorrow, without feeling too deep for words ; and who that see a beloved one thus embark on the tumultuous sea of married life, but tremble while they bless the union. But to the young—the untried in life's warfare—it is an occasion only of joy ; to them it brings no reminiscences, no swelling of the deep tide ever gushing in the faithful bosom, no crushing sensations of love misplaced, of wrongs suffered ; they think not how truly it is “the blight, or bloom of happiness.” An exquisite sense of enjoyment alone pervaded Cora's young heart ; though not unconscious of the general admiration that followed her footsteps, she felt a pleasing gratification in what she deemed a solicitude for her happiness, a bewildering pleasure in the civilities which greeted her. It was pleasant to receive the homage of the crowd, and to have the power to reject it for the love of one devoted heart. In her happiness she had forgotten her father's prejudices. A sweet cup had been presented to her lips, and she had drank it freely, regardless of the consequences. The dazzling life of a belle presented to her no delightful vision. Coquetry dwelt not in her nature. She was too pure and simple-hearted. She seemed a child of the violet-scented woods, in whatever garden she was placed. She reared her head like the lily that bends in the summer breeze, and as pure and proud she seemed ; but like the “forget-me-not” on the bank, she would hide herself

as timidly and gracefully. Like the same delicate spirits of the forest, a breath of coldness chilled her, and without the dew and sunshine, that the heart as well as flower craves, hers was a nature to droop and feel the blast.

As was natural, Cora had become happy in the home of her aunt. She had, it is true, parted with the bride and her enamored husband, but Mrs. Livingston had so urgently invited her to remain (for the latter had been flattered with the admiration her young relative had excited), that she gratefully accepted the invitation.

Her dignified aunt had been as much amazed as her daughter at the self-possession and grace which Cora had exhibited; and though the playfulness, the *naïveté* of the child, often excited a smile from the observing, still her wild gaiety was ever tempered by dignity, and the sweetness of manner that captivated the most fastidious, derived its charms from the indication it gave of her mind and disposition.

At the hour of twelve she was again where she had parted the preceding evening with Wilton.

"Are you expecting visitors, my love," said her aunt, as she affectionately placed her hand on the waving curls of Cora, but before the latter could reply, Rufus Wilton presented himself.

"I am glad that you have come," said Mrs. Livingston, offering her hand to the young man, "to call back the rose that has vanished from the cheek of our young belle. Dissipation does not seem to agree with her."

"Be careful, dear aunt," said Cora, winningly, "You don't know how susceptible I am to flattery, and might plume myself on being called a belle."

"Do you like the appellation?" said Wilton, half reproachfully.

"I can hardly judge," replied Cora. "Isn't it generally considered the great aim in society?" Cora's smile betrayed how little it was hers.

"If she remains in New-York this winter, her tastes will soon be developed," said the aunt, while she left the parlor, assigning an apology for her absence. Wilton then informed Cora that he had been to visit Mrs. Linden.

"I saw you with the lady," said Cora, "last evening. Is she amiable? She seemed to me inaccessible; I think I should fear her."

"She is rather singular," said Wilton, "but still she inte-

rests me. I have known her since I was a boy, and she is among my most sincere friends—perhaps I have not a better. I wish you could have seen her this morning. She is living very obscurely, but if she was in a hovel, she would be queenly. She was as winning and sweet to day, as affectionate gentleness could make a woman, haughty as she seems in company. She sang to me, and talked so beautifully, yet mysteriously, of her life, that I lingered like one charmed. No one but you, Cora, could have lured me from her. She also talked to me of my mother, and described to me minutely her habits and her tastes, and spoke affectingly of her love for me as a child ; but when I ask her history, she says plaintively, ‘Oh, it was the providence of God ; hope, dear Rufus, that you may find her yet.’”

Cora looked seriously as she inquired ; “What does your father say of her ?”

“Cora, on this subject,” replied Wilton, “his silence is as deep as the grave.” As Wilton spoke, flashes of feeling passed over his face. These silent workings of his mind, which often clouded his sunniest moments, had a powerful effect on the imagination of Cora. There seemed to her something within, that she could not read or fathom. This mysterious under-current of thought captivated and excited her fancy. The ideal seemed so woven with the real in his nature, that the sunshine of his smile, to her, was but the gilding to a veiled and magical picture.

And yet openness and candor were strong characteristics in the nature of Rufus Wilton. All that related to himself, his hopes and fears, he would have confided to one who loved him, and sympathized in his emotions ; but dark thoughts concerning his father and his domestic history, cast frequent periods of gloom over his mind, and dampened many of his youthful hours. His dislike of concealment, and horror of duplicity, made him look upon the untold history of his mother with mistrust and sorrow. He felt that knowledge of the worst that could have transpired, would have relieved his apprehensions, but to harbor dark suspicion of his father, such as he could not banish, harassed and distressed him ; and the never-dying tale of his mother's strange disappearance, without a word of explanation to soothe his pride, and the wounded honor of his family, merged him in deep and painful regret.

For some moments he continued silent, then with sweetness

of accent, softened to a girl's tenderness, he said ; "Forgive my abstraction, Cora, you are indeed looking pale this morning, and seem a little sad." He had not observed that the shadow on his own face had also darkened hers. "I hope that you will remain sometime in town," he continued, "and that we can make you very happy here. Will you not promise not to discard me for another guardian? Mr. Clarendon assumes a right, apparently, to protect and entertain you, but such monopoly alarms me little, while you assure me that it meets not with your sanction. Yet, Cora, I cannot understand why, without it, that he can so coolly assume a privilege that makes the world envious, much more one whose life lies in your undivided preference."

"Oh, I wish he was far away," murmured Cora, "I tremble when his eye is on me; I did not once feel so. I made him angry last night."

"How? by leaving him, to dance with me? He certainly does not need a favorite on whom to lavish his courtly smiles, and favors; Cora, generosity need not compel you to make one of the galaxy he honors with his preference. Believe me, dear one, he is consoled, and if he were not—what then?"

Wilton questioned Cora with both eye and tongue. The first seemed to search her with a deep and heartfelt earnestness, while his voice sank to the lowest tone of harmony, as he closed the sentence with a query.

"Oh," Cora whispered, "he knows that I do not like him—I do not mean that—but that I can never be more to him"——

"Than you now are, Cora," interposed Wilton; "then he shall not wear even the semblance of a lover."

"But," murmured Cora, "my father likes him—he has been good to him, and I am grateful."

"Cora, what may I then not fear? what must I not think of all this intimate friendship?"

"He has much business with papa, and he comes very often to see us—but I thought he had given me up, until last evening."

Cora's voice trembled as she spoke, for sudden fears came over her. She then added:—"If the worst should happen—if you can never visit me, he will be nothing to me—believe this, Rufus."

"Oh! Cora," said Wilton passionately. "Have you listened

so lately to words of love from him? My darling Cora, deny it—tell me it is false—do not trifle with me.”

Cora's eyes fell beneath those of Wilton, while she replied: “You torture me; if you would have spared me, why were you not sooner by my side?”

“I could not then leave Mrs. Linden; she is one whom I cannot regard lightly; she has been to me a friend indeed.”

“Ah! but you lingered after she left you; during that interval you might have saved me pain.”

Tears fell through Cora's fingers. Wilton now soothed her as tenderly as he had warmly reproached. Sunlight came through the cloud, and beamed the brighter for the rain-drops that had fallen.

Thrilling words, and professions more fervent than the written page should reveal, lulled the storm of feeling that jealousy had brewed.

While in hushed tones, hand clasped in hand, the young lovers forgot the world beside, and in the blissful present, shut out all boding fears—the door-bell rung! and Mr. Clarendon entered the saloon. As he addressed Cora, he remarked the rich glow of her cheek, and her moistened lashes, and was not deceived by the self-possession of Wilton, nor the less successful efforts of Cora to assume composure. Without regarding the former, save by a cold bow, with graceful ease he seated himself by the latter, commencing to converse upon different topics, without any apparent remembrance of his vexation the evening previous.

Wilton turned to a table where lay some books, to which he devoted his attention. He opened one, and marked a passage; as he did so, he looked across to Cora. With easy indifference the chat proceeded, when Mr. Clarendon asked her if she would accompany him the following day to Rosehill, the residence of an old friend of her father's. As he concluded, he handed Cora a letter, requesting him to take his daughter to the place mentioned. Cora was chagrined, but felt, that under the circumstances, she could not refuse; so with evident reluctance she gave her consent to the proposal. Mr. Clarendon adroitly directed the conversation, wholly drawing her from Wilton, whose occasional remarks to Cora, he interrupted, by making inquiries entirely irrelevant to their import. But to this assumed importance, Cora gave no heed, but replied atten-

tively to Wilton. Her manner enraged Mr Clarendon, which provoked him to add insult to insult, under the disguise of courtesy, in remarks which evidently bore upon the latter.

After endeavoring to do away the impression which his visit had made upon Cora, Mr. Clarendon appointed the hour that he was to call for her, to go into the country, to which she acquiesced, and he took his leave.

A few moments after, Wilton, with strange and sudden coolness, parted with Cora, when she went to her chamber and tried to amuse herself with a book, but her mind was ill at ease. She half wished that she had contented herself with her quiet home and her dear father.

Until Mr. Clarendon had come, she had been happy—and suddenly and painfully arose in her mind the query—"Would her father be pleased did he know the real source of her happiness?" She felt that she had neglected him in her succession of mingled enjoyments. She resolved immediately to write him. There was much, she thought, that she could relate to him about the wedding, and how she liked her new relatives, and moreover, that she had engaged to go to Rosehill with Mr. Clarendon.

All this she sat down and wrote her father, and as her pen flew, and her heart went back to her dear home, she told him too how she longed to see him, and how much sweeter her dear old cot was, than all the splendor of New-York, and that since her separation, she had never loved him so well. Then she sent messages to Sophy, Jamie, and Judy, with injunctions to the latter to be a good girl, and not to forget her birds, her flowers, and to feed her rabbits, and last, though not least, to take good care of old Goody Burke. With many kisses and blessings, she closed her epistle. She had not once mentioned Rufus Wilton. She tried to quiet her conscience by thinking that when she saw her father, she would tell him how unavoidably she had met him, and that if he knew all that had happened, and how sincere and good he was, that he must at last like him. So she tried to reason—love had blindfolded her eyes, and her dream was too beautiful to resign.

She had promised, at the hour of four, to ride with her young lover, and although he had parted from her coldly, she longed for the time to come that she might win back his beautiful smile, and again drink the fascination of the voice she so

well loved. Poor Cora ! her heart was in a sad flutter, for with all her happiness, her father's frown seemed to cast over her its gloom.

The hour came. The air was keen and frosty. There were no glittering trees to dazzle the eye, but the swift gliding sleighs as they passed and repassed in merry confusion—the jingling of bells, the dashing of spirited horses—the rushing of a city populace eager to enjoy the fast vanishing snow—the brilliant display of beautiful women and children, and some not so beautiful, gay in rich attire—was all a scene of exciting interest to Cora. The joy that danced in her eyes, brought sunshine to Wilton's, and he blamed himself for twice clouding the brightness of hers. His high temper and impetuosity cost him much trouble. He had been irritated by the thought of Cora's contemplated ride with Mr. Clarendon, but he saw no way that he could reasonably prevent it, and he endeavored to overcome his repugnance to the step. He had therefore schooled himself into a reasonable mood, while he relied on his trust in Cora.

For sometime the pleasure of their ride was keenly enjoyed. Wilton met many of his acquaintances, and Cora some, which she had made the evening previous. Merry smiles, and significant looks were exchanged. Cora was brilliantly gay, and most pleasantly excited by their joyous ride ; and as they passed onward out of the crowded streets, Cora gave Wilton a brief account of the adventure of her sleighride with Mr. Clarendon, on the Hudson. He had heard something of it, but had never known the extent of her sufferings. The relation from Cora's lips much interested and excited Wilton, and as he followed her in imagination with Clarendon that cold night through the critical snow-path, until they glided madly, and precipitately, to the edge of the ravine, over which they plunged ; with pale lips, and clenched teeth, he muttered something that sounded like a curse on the temerity and carelessness of him who had so recklessly driven her into danger and suffering.

"Oh ! hush !" said Cora, "don't blame him, he saved me nobly."

"Saved you, Cora ! Tell me all your peril," said Wilton, earnestly. Cora went on with the account, and when she pictured their freezing state, and the depths of snow in which they were left embedded, and of Clarendon's energy and reso-

lution, in carrying her almost lifeless and cold as death itself, so near the inn, where he sunk himself exhausted ; with a voice of tremor and passion, Wilton exclaimed :—

“It was heroically done, Cora, but had he had a drop of man’s blood in his veins, he would have died, to have saved one he had so imminently perilled. For his resolution I forgive him, but had he flinched one millionth part of a step the less, he should have been posted as less than a man in heart, nerve, or courage. He would not have deserved a burial if he had died by your side, while such an impetus stirred him onward. Cora, my blood boils when I think of his rashness. Poor little frozen one !” Wilton’s impassioned voice now softened into the tone of gentlest pity, and as he spoke the robe was involuntarily drawn about her, although the sun was fast melting away the snow.

“But you do not award him all he deserves, I think,” said Cora.

“Shall I thank the man that rashly plunged me into a stream, without warning, because he tries to resuscitate me when life is nearly extinct ?”

“Ah ! yes,” said Cora. “Be grateful for all the good we receive ; without the evil we might not appreciate it.”

“You would then advocate the doctrine, ‘do evil, that good may come ?’ No, Cora, I may be stern in my notions of right, but I would look before I leap, and if I knew the *right* path, I believe it my duty to follow it, though by it I sacrificed my happiness, even my life. But this is not apropos—Clarendon knew the value of the prize he guarded—he should not have risked it for a selfish pleasure—but I believe this is characteristic of the man—he will plunge headlong over any precipice, so that he fancies the road to its edge a smooth one. May it be the last plunge that you will take with him. Cora, I wish to speak more frankly with you. I despise an underhanded course as much in love matters, as in those of another nature. My heart and soul are bound up in you, but without your father’s sanction, I do wrong to address you. God knows that I believe it fully in my power to gain his consent, otherwise my tongue should have been silent. I know his prejudice against my father, but that need not necessarily extend to the son. I was rather haughty at our last meeting. Be my mediator, Cora, and I will seek him immediately with your permission.”

Cora's heart was lightened of its burden. Wilton wished to acknowledge boldly his affection for her—now she should be strengthened in her plea for her dear, her noble Wilton. In trustful silence, such silence as tells more truthful confidence than words can convey, they returned from their joyous ride. By invitation of Mrs. Linden, Cora consented to call with Wilton, the same evening, at her abode. The latter explained to Cora the reduced circumstances of his friend, and the privacy of her home. He told her that she must trust to him, and that he hoped whatever peculiarities she observed in the lady, that she would regard them charitably, and not allow them to bias her mind against her. To this Cora readily consented.

As evening advanced, they sought the home of Mrs. Linden. Cora had obtained readily the consent of her aunt, to accompany the rich and popular young favorite, whose hand the proudest belle would have accepted, and whose attentions to her pretty niece had been considered so marked and flattering to the 'country beauty.' So they threaded the public streets, and thence through more obscure and darker ones, until they reached a low and humble dwelling, the abode of Mrs. Linden and Flora Islington.

Since the last interview of Flora with her deserted guardian, and the visit to his home unknown to himself, whence she had fled with pious resolution, she had wandered serene and statue-like in the path of her daily duties. She sang more than formerly, and her reveries were longer and more abstracted. Yet her smile came again: but Mrs. Linden said that it made her more sad than her tears—its sweetness was so angelic, as she spoke of the peace that had come to her heart—of the terrible struggles that had all passed away, and left her calm and happy. When she now sung, few that heard the melting tenderness of her tones could restrain their tears. At times she would go to her chamber and take out the old instrument that had been the charm of her childhood, and steal away by herself, and play upon it—and as she thus sat, how often, with her hair unbound, she was like the little Flora, as she came to her guardian, after her mother's death. She had lost none of her perfection of form, but she was now so pale, and her attitudes often so childlike, and her expression so pure and radiant, that no one who looked upon her could have thwarted her, but an instinctive feeling would lead the beholder to part her long

hair, and to smooth her beautiful temples, while they said, "Poor Flora, go to thy rest."

But "little" Flora was not deranged, though she seemed too sad, too sweet for this mortal guise. She loved her flowers and her little bird that her guardian had given her, for he finally sent her everything that had belonged to her, and more than all, she loved her Bible and her God. She spent hours in prayer, with her head bent sorrowfully, while she seemed never to cease to mourn the hour of passion and sinful emotion, that carried her back to her guardian's home, for "oh," she murmured, "it was idolatry," the madness of an earthly love, that to heaven she had vowed to crush. Flora knew that to-night Mrs. Linden expected a friend. She had seen her weep after the departure of a young man that she had never seen, simply wondering if she had ever known what it was to love. To-night she had heard her say, that her young friend was coming again, and was to bring a beautiful girl with him, and she expected her to see them.

But Flora smiled and sighed while she shook her head, and said, "I will go and carry some gruel to old sick Katy, and read to her until they are gone. I will return as soon as the carriage passes. I can see from the windows of Katy's room."

It chanced that the same night, Mr. Clarendon had seen Cora and Wilton leave the home of Mrs. Livingston. The former had just driven to the door which they left. He had observed the movements of the two, and ordered his driver to follow in the same direction. At no great distance he watched them; and when he alighted at the door of Mrs. Linden, he had stepped from the vehicle, and across the street from her present home, had seen Flora enter that of the humble Katy.

Cora in all her fresh young charms was now forgotten. A thrill of stronger emotion than her loveliness had ever inspired, shot through his frame. He was again near his own, once loving Flora. He saw her pale, chiselled features, her dark, lustrous eyes, and the expression of ineffable sweetness that played about her mouth, as she went forth in the performance of her holy duty. The curtain was unclosed in Katy's lowly room. His once pleasure-loving idol, she who had so often sunk by his side, while he had won her smiles, and then drawn tears of delicious joy, as she listened, enraptured with the seductive poetry he read—the same dear one was before him, so changed,

so differently occupied. He watched her waving form, as it bent over the old woman's bed. And there, on that old, wrinkled form, rested with benignant sweetness, the eyes that had disappeared as stars sometimes do in the cloudless blue of heaven. He saw her put the cup to the old woman's parched and skinny lips, and looked upon her own, still beautiful, though of paler, fainter red. He watched her white, soft fingers, as they smoothed the pillow of the sufferer, and saw her replace the fresh young flowers that had dropped from the palsied, trembling hand of the old woman (for with a clutch she had tried to reach them), and then sit down by her side, and read her a hymn of peace and joy. It was a holy sight; but the heart of Louis Clarendon was not purified by the vision. The old woman seemed to him but pollution to her touch, and the wretchedness of the hovel but the prison bars to a beautiful warbler, that had once sung in light and fragrance. He saw naught but fanaticism in her charitable employment, and the influence of a Puritanical hypocrite in the desertion of his lovely ward.

She now approached the window, to see if the carriage had left the door of Mrs. Linden; for after it should have rolled away, she intended to go home. She went about the room, and performed all those gentle offices the sick required, and when she saw that old Katy was in a comfortable sleep, she retired into a small room near the entrance, and with her head on her hand, listened for the sound of the carriage. Mr. Clarendon, in the meanwhile, had paced the walk, and at each turn had looked into the low, uncurtained window. He now saw that Flora had left the bed, and that the old woman was asleep. He summoned a carriage, and resolved to take Flora home with him, and to endeavor, if possible, to regain her confidence. He could never forget that he had vowed to cherish the orphan child, and her situation pained and distressed him. Was there one in the wide world, he asked himself, that loved her as he did; one who would lavish upon her wealth and luxury?

He argued himself into the belief, that as her guardian, and by his vow to her dying mother, he had a *right* to claim her; so he opened the door of the humble dwelling, and stood by the side of Flora. She did not start or scream, for little now agitated her, but she rose, and said gently:

"You have erred, sir—this is the home of a poor sick

woman." But before she could have received a reply, she recognized her guardian's features.

"Flora," said he, "you are pale and wretched; come home, my darling, and I will make you happy."

The sad girl raised her eyes, and mournfully put aside his hand, while she said:

"Is it wretchedness to do good? our Saviour found happiness in the office. And you, my dear guardian, once felt it pleasure, when you soothed a dying mother's bed, and protected her little child. That friendless one is always grateful; but *his* home, is now no longer a home for *her*. Oh, it matters not," she again murmured, in a sweet low tone, "where our home is, in this poor world. Look at that old dying woman, she will soon be richer than we are. She will be at peace in her heavenly home. I am glad that you sent me my bird and my old lute, and my books, they comfort me, for I am not wretched now. Go back, dear guardian, you were kind to come and speak to me, for you would not harm me—I am not afraid of you, though it is dark and lonely here. You, who cherished the little orphan one, could not make my heart ache with sorrow; when I loved you so madly, it pained me to think of you even while I clung to you so wildly; but now, I can pray for you, and see you without one pang."

"And is your love all gone, Flora?"

The pale girl fixed her large eyes on his, and giving him her hand, said, "Do I love you?—*love you*?—no one else on earth fills this poor heart but *you*, my guardian, my early friend; for you, I would sacrifice my life; for you, I would wander over the wide earth, but it would be for your eternal happiness. Could I, who ought to be so grateful, abuse the gifts of Heaven, abuse your early love for me, and with wild insanity, fly to your Eden bower, and again worship you, casting out the God who has protected me, and who will lead us both to the gate of Heaven? Oh, would that you felt the peace that is not of earth! But I trust that hour will come. The night is cold; will you suffer going home?"

"Flora, come where no cold shall chill you; if *my* home is no home for you, I will find another; as you say, could I harm you, angel one? No, you shall be as safe beneath my protecting care as in a brother's. Flora, I tenderly, purely love you, would that I could take you to this bosom, never more on earth to part! but this cannot be; but I can see you—I can

love you, and these sad eyes will brighten beneath the roof where I will place you. Music shall be our food, and warmth, light, and fragrance, the atmosphere you breathe."

Flora drew her hand over her pale forehead, while she faintly said, "I feel as if in a dream, I was listening; your words strangely fascinate me; but I can leave you now—once I could not."

"Oh, no—not yet, you must not go forth to that miserable home." As Clarendon spoke, he approached her, but she had slid trembling from him, and not until he had made an effort to take her to the carriage, did a sound betray her agitation.

Then, the low, wild cry was faint, and that was an appeal to her God. At that moment, Cora and Wilton were listening to the cheerful voice of Mrs. Linden. She had welcomed Cora with a kiss upon her forehead, and told her, while she passed her hand over her silken hair, that she looked a little—a very little like her father. Mrs. Linden spoke tenderly, and looked earnestly upon her. Cora was made happy, unexpectedly so, by the warmth of her greeting; she even amused them by her seeming gaiety. She sang and played to them in a brilliant style, and then, at Wilton's request, touched the keys of her instrument with more soulful music, and even drew tears by the pathos of her tones.

With her eyes upon Cora, Mrs. Linden came behind the chair of her young friend, and with both her hands drew her fingers through his hair, then throwing it back from his forehead, with a look of pride, she said, "Does he not look better so? So I used to dress his hair while in college. Don't you think our Rufus is a careless boy? Careless of all but those he loves; there his vigilance never ceases."

"Ah, my dear friend," Wilton replied, "you are too partial. It is true that I would like the privilege of protecting you in your lonely home."

At this moment, Mrs. Linden had looked forth into the street. Old Katy's dwelling was opposite hers. She saw the carriage and heard the faint cry of Flora, as she retreated from a form just visible in the darkness.

Without a word, she rushed out of the door, and while Clarendon was again at the side of Flora, she grasped his arm, and exclaimed in an under tone.

"Release her; she has chosen her own lot, and the penalty will rest on your soul, if you lure her from the asylum in

which Heaven has placed her." Clarendon disappeared in the darkness, and Flora clasped the arm of Mrs. Linden. The next moment, the pale bewildered girl sank breathless on her bosom. Rufus Wilton came hastily across the street, and assisted Mrs. Linden in the care of the fainting girl.

They brought her into the parlor, where Cora sat agitated with alarm at the strange and sudden scene. The face of Flora struck them as like that of a beautiful statue, as she lay apparently lifeless on the couch.

Not a word was said in explanation of the scene, and Cora and Wilton left wholly in mystery as to the affair. But the latter had seen the carriage as it rolled onward, which kept in advance of their own, until it stopped at the door of Mr. Clarendon.

"Whose beautiful house is that?" said Cora, as she noticed the front of a costly edifice, the balconies of which were filled with plants. "See that lovely court beside it, with the carved stone pillars!"

"That is the home of Mr. Clarendon, Cora, and that gentleman now alighting, is himself."

"He must then have been near us to-night," said Cora.

"But not to see you only, dearest—he has had another object."

The features and prostrate form of Flora lingered on Cora's memory, and Wilton reflected with deep interest on the incident that so accidentally revealed to them the unconscious girl. Why she was rescued from seeming peril by Mrs. Linden, he knew not; he only believed that all his friend had done was right; and that she had in her heart, and on her mind, darker mysteries, yet unrevealed.

The evening had been, both to Wilton and Cora, a happy one. The snow had all vanished, but the air was clear and the star-light shone peacefully upon them. They had greatly enjoyed their long ride, and the agitation which the vision of Flora had brought to their minds, was at length forgotten in the communion of their own hearts. But one weight rested upon their spirits. They had not yet the approbation of Colonel Livingston to their tacit engagement. Both were sanguine, however, and Cora knew how well her father loved her. Could he then fail to secure her happiness? She scarcely doubted, and when Wilton read in her blue eyes all the hope they expressed, his own faith was strong, that he could over-

come the prejudices of the Colonel. Mrs. Livingston asked no questions on their return, and they were spared giving her the mortifying intelligence that they had been to look up the old governess of her daughter.

The very happy day was now over, and Cora went to sleep, resolving that in the proposed jaunt to Rosehill, she should conduct herself with cool civility to her companion.

It was, as Mr. Clarendon prophesied, a beautiful day for the Rosehill expedition, and Cora was equipped and ready at the hour appointed. He was more than usually dignified and polite—he even asked Mrs. Livingston to accompany them, almost urged it, and Cora began to be ashamed of her fears. He never showed to better advantage his conversational brilliancy, or his intellectual superiority, than during the ride. Accustomed to being the oracle of the fashionable circles in which he mingled, he was conscious of his powers, but to Cora he had chiefly exhibited the softer fascinations of his personal address; but now his mind roved elsewhere, and he talked agreeably on general topics.

After they had proceeded a short distance, some remarks relative to the recent fall of snow recalled to their minds their last sleighride. Mr. Clarendon made allusion to it, which was necessarily a cold one. His conversation, at times, related to topics of mutual interest, with which he would entertain Cora with unusual spirit. Cora had therefore a most agreeable ride to Rosehill. Nothing had marred her enjoyment; it is true it had none of the charm of her drive the previous evening, but not a breeze had blown too roughly—not a jar had occurred to wound her feelings, or ruffle her serenity, and she returned home, where Wilton awaited her arrival, in such spirits, that the young lover was decidedly inclined to be jealous. One incident on their ride, she afterwards told to Wilton. They had stopped at a green-house on their return, to obtain a bouquet of flowers. While she selected it, with only the gardener's assistance, Mr. Clarendon looking on indifferently, she observed that he procured a choice collection, and in a low voice ordered it sent, as she thought, to the same number of the street that they had visited the previous evening, and after giving the direction, he attached a slip of paper to the

bouquet, with the name, as she supposed, of the person to whom he sent it. "Can it be," said Cora, "that he sends flowers to Mrs. Linden?"

Wilton smiled equivocally, and said, "Are you jealous, Cora?"

Cora laughed, and Wilton turned the subject, but not until Cora had observed that after Mr. Clarendon had sent away the flowers, he seemed unusually silent.

A fortnight passed away with Cora, in the richest enjoyment. In the meanwhile, Wilton had written to Colonel Livingston, but had as yet received no reply. During the latter part of her visit, she saw little of Mr. Clarendon; whenever he called, he found Wilton so constantly with Cora, that he wholly discontinued his visits. Still she felt herself often watched; at the opera, he was ever in an adjoining box, though seemingly unobservant of her, and often passed her in the street with but a friendly smile; still she felt a consciousness of his presence, but was too happy with her devoted lover to regard the penetrating glance that she sometimes caught, or his evident coldness, which he intended she should feel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Oh! what authority and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!

SHAKESPEARE.

A WINTER'S sun shone brightly into the study of Colonel Livingston, where he sat meditating upon the probable result of his action against Mr. Wilton. Successful, through Mr. Clarendon, in obtaining the office which he had sought, his ambition now lay in winning back the estate which he considered rightfully his. He had heard, through Clarendon, of his daughter, besides receiving several joyous epistles from her own pen. He learned that she had shone in conspicuous loveliness at the bridal party, and, what more gratified him, that she had comported herself with dignity and elegance among her newly-found relatives; for the Colonel had somewhat feared that her rustic tastes and wild freedom would affect her bearing in society.

His thoughts reverted with pride to this dearest solace of his life, and his eye kindled, when he thought of the brilliant prospects which her marriage with Mr. Clarendon would afford. He had watched them much of late, when together. Cora's old repugnance to him seemed, in his eye, to have worn away. He knew that his friend was deeply attached to his daughter; and he thought when she had become old enough to be the wife of any one, that she might be very happy, united to him. He had received a letter from Wilton respecting her, with the expressed hope that his attachment for Cora would meet with his approbation. On receiving it, he was highly indignant, but concluded to treat it with silent contempt, resolving that when Cora returned, he would forbid any intercourse between them. Thus he pondered, when his thoughts were suddenly broken in upon by the appearance of Mr. Clarendon. The Colonel had been much alone since Cora's absence, and cordially greeted his visitor, expressing, also, his surprise at seeing him.

To the ease of his accustomed address he now added affected good humor, and unusual candor in the exposure of his intentions and plans, and so confidentially approached the Colonel, that the latter was much flattered by his manner, and the cordiality with which he expressed himself. Being naturally dictatorial and imperious, Mr. Clarendon, from policy, often affected some suppleness, in order to appear to yield in the onset of an argument, that he might, by his oratory, more skillfully gain his point. He, therefore, seldom offended, though he came off the victor, his triumph being forgiven by his smooth mode of effecting it, when another would have made an enemy of his opponent. Thus he continued to rise in the estimation of his party and his professional brethren, who acknowledged his eminent legal abilities, and his logical mind, which could reason clearly and smoothly; while his eloquence swayed the judgment that he would convince.

The Colonel was fully aware of Mr. Clarendon's position, and, at the same time, blind to the favorable light in which surrounding circumstances placed him, and that one less conspicuous might, under the same advantages of wealth and station, have attained the same eminence. He, therefore, greatly exalted Louis Clarendon in his imagination; while his prejudice against the Wilton family entirely obliterated all pretensions to merit or talent in the son, in his one-sided estimation. He was, therefore, well prepared for the art and management

exhibited by Clarendon, in carrying out his scheme of marrying Cora. It was true that he believed that he loved the young girl whom he so greatly admired ; but this alone did not spur him on to success in his purpose. He had not been accustomed to defeat ; he had prided himself upon not being baffled in his undertakings. His indefatigable labor earned him as many laurels as his undoubted talents ; and his determined will was the engine that gave him impetus, in defiance of obstacles. His conscience was governed by no moral laws ; he had devoted himself to the father, to gain the daughter, and he felt that he had earned the prize. Cora's preference he would gladly secure ; and he believed that, but for Wilton, he should have obtained it. Still, he feared not that if Cora Livingston was once his wife, he could win her devoted love. But Clarendon knew that if the Colonel entertained the idea that he considered his daughter property easily transferred, he could make no progress in his suit.

To the Colonel's inquiries relative to the new plans, half-unfolded, Mr. Clarendon replied, " that it was his intention to travel, and that, before many weeks, he should probably be on another continent." The Colonel was much dismayed—his hopes of the suit entirely rested on the former. He could only utter an exclamation of deep regret.

The friend and counsellor was for awhile silent ; then he coolly remarked, that there was " nothing like travel to kill disappointment."

" But, Clarendon," said the Colonel, in a tone of expostulation, " we cannot lose you—your departure would ruin me now."

" I am sorry to disappoint you, Colonel ; but I have for some time anticipated a tour of travel. I may be absent a year. You can obtain as good counsel as myself. Prove the existence of a later will, if you can ; secure the absent witness, if you can find him ; collect your evidence, and put your case in Rodney's hands."

" He will ruin my cause. You understand its features, and the points of the case ; and, furthermore, your ingenuity is as important to me as your professional skill. You know all that I have to contend with. What is right to possession ! Upon your energy and determination I have placed my reliance."

" I am sorry to disappoint you, but I wish for change ; I am wearied with the monotony of business."

"Why not, then, find it in domestic life, Clarendon? I thought that you was rearing a *protégé* for a housekeeper, and a—companion. Nice girl, I hear—very good of you. Who was her mother?"

"A foreign lady. She is not with me—took only as a child. What is the domestic life you talk of? A bachelor's breakfast, a hum-drum dinner at home, or at a club. A wife might make a contented man of me."

"Why not, then, marry, Clarendon, and remain at home?"

"Colonel Livingston, I have had my views, and you have known them, and I have had reason to expect a different turn in some matters. Tacitly, you have of late, consented to my addresses to your daughter—at least they have not seemed disagreeable to you. But I have no time or disposition to contend with boys in marrying. Miss Cora has been sent to town without my knowledge, which, considering my interest in her, was at least a matter of regret; but this is not all, nor the half of it. I am disappointed, grievously so, and I wish in some excitement to drive her entirely from my thoughts. I am too old to be playing the fool in running after a girl who has—disappointed me."

"But, my dear Clarendon, consider that Cora is young—never thought of marrying—may look more favorably upon the subject at some future day. I am sorry—distressed"—

"Don't feel so on my account, sir. I am a philosopher in such matters, and have passed the Rubicon, where lovers hang or drown for the coquetry of their mistresses. If she prefers another, why, I have only to desert the field." Mr. Clarendon lighted his cigar while he spoke, and as he placed his legs across a chair, took up a newspaper. Presently laying it down, he looked into the anxious face of the Colonel, while he said, "There is nothing like action for the mind; I should like to spend these cut-throat spring months in the south of France."

"But this determination is very sudden," said the Colonel.

"So is my disappointment sudden."

"Did you go to Rosehill with my daughter?"

"I did, and then delivered her into the care of her new guardian."

"What new guardian?" said the Colonel alarmed. "She is, of course, protected by her aunt, who is discreet, and judicious, I suppose, in her acquaintances."

"I think after she had delivered her over to this young gentleman-loafer, Wilton, she feels that she has done her duty; but, if she was not as blind as a dead beetle, she would see the course that things are taking."

"This reminds me," said the Colonel, now excited, "of the letter the fellow wrote me"—

"He has written you—the thing then is settled?"

"So far settled," said the Colonel, "that I lighted my cigar with the letter. I, of course, did not notice it—this neglect will put an end to the matter doubtless. How much has Wilton been with Cora?"

"Constantly," said Clarendon, still smoking.

"Very indiscreet in Cora—in her aunt. Seems to like her? does he?—visits the family, I suppose."

"Yes—considered *rich*, you know."

"Rich! yes; rich on my daughter's lawful inheritance—the rascal! rich indeed! so he cuts a swell, does he, on such expectations? Mighty little they'll serve him after the next term of court."

"Ah! but it gives him *éclat* now, and you know young gentlemen of elegant leisure, who have rich fathers, have plenty of time to devote themselves to the ladies."

"He, a rich father! Cora ought to know my detestation of the race. Does he visit his relatives with her, and gallant her abroad?"

"I don't know to what places he goes with her. I met them in — street, the other evening, about ten o'clock, where I went on business."

"Where were they going in *that* street?" said the Colonel quickly.

"I believe that he has some low connections living in that part of the city, some to whom he wished to introduce Cora. They could not, of course, visit her at Mrs. Livingston's."

"Cora says nothing especial of Wilton in her letters," replied the Colonel musing. "Visits low people! low connections—yes, yes—on the Wilton side—not on the Neville."

"Why! Colonel, the girl only wants a proper guardian on her first visit to New York. She is, of course, credulous and unsuspecting, and easily led by one as designing as old Roger himself. He has a fair, candid way with him, and so I suppose had the devil, when he wooed our mother Eve."

"You cannot fear any immediate cause for alarm, Clarendon?"

"I have no fears or hopes in the case. It is your own and daughter's risk; but I will bring her back, if you say so. I shall not sail this week."

"Defer your trip. My daughter has been perhaps fooled by flattery, but she will form no attachment without my consent; her good sense will regulate this. She is a child in her knowledge of society, but is easily influenced. Wait, Clarendon. I have as yet thought of no connection for her. She is young yet; will perhaps think of marrying some day. This is the same fellow she picked flowers and berries with. He is impertinent, decidedly so; takes her to see low people, the young rascal."

"Why, Colonel, on the whole, I have been dissatisfied with her course in town; but, as yet, she knows little of the advantages accruing from highly respectable acquaintances. I am particular in my associations myself. I can overlook a flirtation; girls are apt to be coquettish; but such entire exclusiveness in her tastes, is not common in one of her age. In view of marrying her, I would, of course, defer my tour, and would consult your convenience in the time I might choose. But I cannot dally with suspense. You know my strong preference for your daughter over any woman that I have ever met; and a connection with your family is also a consideration with me. One's wife's connections is a great matter in society. Wealth is an affair of no importance to me. In such a relation I am, of course, bound to serve you. Our united efforts can wrest your estate, I think, from Roger Wilton. I flatter myself that I could do your case justice, but I am sick with disappointment, and unless there is a change in my prospects, I shall leave the country."

"Clarendon," said the Colonel, warmly, "I feel much indebted to you. You have infinitely obliged me; I wish I could do something for you—but you know—one's child is not a"—

"A thing to barter, Colonel. No, my dear sir, God forbid any attempt at such traffic. My services for you have been disinterested—wholly so. Neither do I wish you to influence your daughter in my favor; such preference must be voluntary on her part. I have not come to urge the matter in the least—but simply to tell you that if she is really inclined towards Wilton, and the connection meets with your approbation, that I do not wish to remain at home to see the matter consummated."

"My pecuniary obligations to you annoy me much, Clarendon."

"You will offend me, Colonel, if you allude to them."

"How can I be otherwise than distressed. My place is mortgaged—heavy sums are borrowed without security, and my small income is wholly insufficient to repay you."

"Say nothing of your indebtedness, and I implore you never to allude to the subject in the hearing of your daughter," said Clarendon.

Colonel Livingston fell into a reverie, and Clarendon turned to his paper. His glance at the countenance of the former, showed him that he had little doubt of his influence. Something within seemed to assure him that Cora Livingston would yet be his wife. Were I more indifferent, thought he, I would not be thwarted by this bold young suitor; he knows he is treading upon my ground, and assumes a preferred position, without even "by your leave, sir." Her indifference, vanity whispered, he would risk, when rid of a younger rival, who, he must acknowledge, disagreeable as he was to himself, was most assuredly a favorite with the ladies.

Mr. Clarendon was much pleased with the effect he had produced upon the Colonel's mind. He accepted his host's invitation to dinner, and grew bland and persuasive over his wine, of which he freely partook. The Colonel also, feeling doubtful of his position with his guest, never felt more inclined to conciliate his good will, and if possible, to make atonement for Cora's slight of his distinguished friend. Therefore, while the latter flattered and encouraged the Colonel respecting his prospects, he busied himself in the hospitalities of his table, and passed and repassed the wine, until Judy rolled up her eyes in astonishment, for she knew that it was the last in the cellar, and that the Colonel had been keeping it, he said, for Miss Cora's birthday. But still the wine flowed, and the host and his guest grew amiable, while the latter praised old Lady Livingston's portrait, and talked of her alliance to the Scottish Mary, which led to the discussion of beauty, making the channel towards that of his charming daughter.

"I will take another glass, Colonel," said Mr. Clarendon, "this madeira is superior—aroma fine. I have nothing like it. I wish," he continued, while he raised the wine to his lips, "that you could have seen Cora the night of her cousin's wedding. She looked like a daughter of a peer."

"Nothing rustic, Clarendon, eh? take another—try sherry, I like this." The Colonel looked at the brand; "you

decline—champaigne then, I saved this bottle purposely for you."

Judy slipped out of the room to tell Sophy that "the Colonel had drank up all Miss Cora's wine, and the gentlemen were getting awful red in the face ; but if there was any left, she'd look out for a drop for her." This was quickly done, and Judy again demurely in her place, behind her master's chair.

"Rustic," said Clarendon, uncorking the bottle handed him, "you might as well call England's youthful queen rustic. Why, my dear Colonel, your daughter outshone the city-girls as proudly as the moon outshines the stars. She floated like a fairy, and withal, with a dignity so sweet she would 'shake the saintship of an anchorite.' I cannot describe her, Colonel, as she appeared to me, but 'who can paint the hues of heaven.' Were any of her ancestors as beautiful?"

"One of them, certainly," said the Colonel, with a benignant smile. "Queen Mary of Scotland."

"Queen Mary or the Blessed Virgin never wore a sweeter countenance."

"You may see it through a brilliant medium just now. Wine you know is a great magnifier of beauty."

Clarendon replied :

"What cannot wine perform?—it brings to light
The secret soul, and bids the coward fight."

Then, while he raised his glass, sang,

"The generous wine brings joy divine,
And beauty charms our soul ;
I while on earth, will still with mirth
Drink beauty and the bowl."

"Well, Colonel," he continued, "I have proved the quality of your nectar, and will now try your cigars, and remember, Colonel, this visit must be returned. I can't give you as good wine, but I have some fine Havanas that I must share with you. Shall we resort to the piazza, or will you allow me a *siesta* on your lounge?"

"Most assuredly, anywhere," said the Colonel, putting his specs on upside down, "it is very fine place to sleep—good brand. I'll take the easy-chair—think I could sleep like—like—a nut."

"Well, anybody that speaks to me for an hour, must do it at their peril. I'm going in," said Clarendon,

"For immortal dreams, that could beguile,
The blind old man of Scio's rocky isle."

The Colonel and his guest were as good as their word. When Judy cleared the table and sipped the glasses, while she shook the bottles to see if the promised glass for Sophy was left, not a sound was heard, but a funeral note from the dog that whined about Judy's feet for a bone, so still she slid away with a brandy peach, and custard dish, for fear she should disturb the gentlemen, who, it seemed to her, ought to lie down, they were *o sleepy!* Six o'clock came before the sleepers aroused to a sense of their duties, the chief of which now on the mind of the Colonel, was bringing Cora home. After a cup of coffee, the gentlemen discussed the manner of doing it, though with less vigor than before dinner.

Mr. Clarendon was easily persuaded to remain until morning, and, before he had retired, had informed the Colonel that he trusted that he should yet have many more agreeable visits with him, before he went to Europe.

CHAPTER XIX.

Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,
And fondly broods with miser Care;
Time but the impression deeper makes,
As streams their channel deeper wear.

BURNS.

CORA is at home once more. The imagination of the happy girl now lingers over the delicious moments enjoyed during her first visit in town. The gallantry of the many beaux that sought her smiles is forgotten; the gay city, with its brilliant shops, its fashionable resorts, its crowded saloons, where she had, like a butterfly, sailed on golden wings—all fade in her recollection. She has come back to her sequestered home, and a new glory seems, like a halo of brightness, to invest each

object. Her father had met her with outstretched arms, and observed the glow of happiness that beamed in every glance of her sweet young face. He pressed her to his heart, and exclaimed, with fervor, that his darling had come, and that he was no longer lonely. But there was one glad face that had greeted her soonest of all. Judy had been seen flying, like some blue-legged object of nature, species dubious, as she went like a colt over fences, and a duck over mud-puddles, and a scared fowl over hedges and ditches, to meet the carriage, a mile down the road, that was to bring Miss Cory home. Her sparkling black eyes, and flying hair, and green sun-bonnet, blown off in the wind, with the long, energetic strides, betrayed to the eyes of Cora her wild, but heart-faithful Judy. She had the carriage stopped, to speak to her ; and in a few moments more, she was within the gate, and in her father's glad embrace. With her arm in his, she ascended the steps of the cottage, and from thence to the old familiar sitting-room. She had been gone three weeks. It seemed a year, so many incidents had marked the time.

Her father drew her, as when a child, fondly to his knee. She threw her arms about his neck, and told him that she had been very, very happy. She again sat at the table, and poured tea for her father, and gladdened his heart by her sweet gaiety and fond attentions. Like a happy child, she related many events that occurred during her visit, all but her association with Rufus Wilton. "Ah !" but she thought, "he will soon be here, and then all shall be revealed."

After the tea things were removed, she ran all over the house, to distribute the presents she had brought. A pretty cap she had, with green ribbons, for Sophy ; and a work-box, with scissors and thimble, for Judy, who clapped her hands, and screamed more like a wild goose than ever ; and to-morrow, she intended to see old Goody, to carry her the nice merino dress she had brought her, though she knew the color wouldn't suit (for no color ever did) ; but this Cora did not regard. Her visits having been made to the kitchen, and to the stable—for she must see dear Robin, and pat his ears and silky mane—she then held little Frisk captive, and put around his neck a pretty little collar that Wilton had bought him—and never, in her eyes, did the little dog look half so cunning.

Cora was indeed happy to come home again ; for although her cheek had burned, and a sigh had come very gently with

her low, half-trembling good bye, as she bade her young lover adieu, while he promised to soon follow her, still she had been away a long time, and her father missed her, and she knew that he must need her at home. So she was resigned to part with scenes of so much happiness, believing in that bright, that dream-land beyond.

It was still snowy and cold, for it was yet February ; though her sunny nature was none the less genial for frost and frozen roads.

Cora was so joyous, and so full of love and kindness to all around her, that for a few days Colonel Livingston felt great reluctance to mar her happiness, by any reproof regarding the attentions she had received from Wilton. She had perceived the anxious look that occasionally clouded her father's face, but had seemed not to observe it ; and so days went by, leaving her still happy. She warbled about her work, bird-like, as of old, and again commenced her routine of duty, as cheerfully as if she had not spent nearly a month in idleness, luxury, and pleasure. It was, therefore, very painful for her father to excite her unruffled bosom by referring to the hopes of Mr. Clarendon, or reproach her for the attentions of Wilton.

But a letter came from the former, which spurred him on. The rumor was abroad, that his daughter was betrothed to the son of his opponent. This was repugnant to his feelings. He tried to argue with himself, that he was only increasing her happiness, by placing her in a brilliant position in life at some future day, and under the protection of an honorable and devoted husband. He had of late thought more of the connection, and persuaded himself that if she did not now realize it, she must eventually come to the conclusion, that it would ensure her prosperity and happiness. He, therefore, nerved himself to the task ; for he wished to settle the matter before the coming of Mr. Clarendon to Villacora, unconscious that he was at all swayed by the wishes of the latter. "It is for her happiness," was his reflection, "and to save her from a connection that she ought to despise, that I shall plead for Mr. Clarendon." He thought of the disparity in their years, and wished that it was less ; but when he recalled his youthful appearance, and the manners that the youngest might envy, he was resigned to the difference.

One dark and rainy evening, a fortnight after Cora's return home, the Colonel had fidgeted a long time at his daughter's

prolonged absence, on a visit that she had made to one of the neighbors. It was one of those driving easterly storms that come up furiously sometimes, after long brewing, which had not been immediately anticipated when Cora went out. The rain now poured steadily, without cessation; while the lanes were flooding over with water, which, descending down the long pipes at the house-corners, made a great and continued splurging, that seemed to make the rain more plentiful than it really was. Sophy had driven up into the garret, to shut the scuttle-door; and Judy had wet her long legs and ankles "soaking through," running out to the gate "to see if Miss Cory wasn't coming," and had arrived, with a kind of soft slapping of shoe-leather, into the clean kitchen; whereupon she was "slatted" out by Sophy into the wood-shed, to take off her wet shoes, without much ceremony. But this Judy cared little about, for her dress was always short, and the condition of her extremities never of much consequence to her; so she soon stripped them, and patted up the back stairway to bed, letting them dry their own way.

Cora had, in the meantime, returned through the drenching rain, much to the relief of her father; and being freed of her envelopments, had told all about her delightful visit—that she had danced until the moment of leaving, and was so warm when she came from the parlor of her friends, that she feared she had taken cold, "she was in such a chill." The Colonel stirred up the fire vigorously, and prepared a glass of "something hot" (which he never forgot on all necessary occasions) for her to drink, and made her come and sit beside him on the sofa, which he drew nearer the fire. "Your hands are really cold, my daughter," said he, as he rubbed them between his own. "You ought to have known, Cora, that it would rain. I have been looking for the storm all day—the wind has been easterly since morning."

"But you know, papa, that when you looked out, before I left, you thought it was clearing away."

"You are mistaken, child—I knew it would rain."

"But you told me that the old peacock hadn't screeched, and that that was a good sign."

"But he did screech—infernally, my daughter, and any one of common sense might have foretold the storm; but you are always crazy-headed, and running into trouble. Yes, yes, child, I have known it would rain all the week."

"Well, and so it has rained, papa, and you were a good prophet after all ; and more than that, I say, let it rain ; I love to hear it come pattering down the eaves, but I don't like to hear the shutters bang ; they must be closed before we go to bed. I wonder if Sophy has been over the house."

"I heard her go to the garret, and afterwards scold Judy for running in with her wet feet. You have taken cold, I fear, you are so imprudent."

"Don't be alarmed about me, papa. I am so happy to get by this bright fire. I will sit down on this low seat, while you talk to me, and tell me what you hinted at this morning. Something has been on your mind ever since I came home. Now we are so comfortable, let us settle the matter, whatever it is. I am a great counsellor, and it is an affair that troubles you. Perhaps you meditate cutting down my dear old tree, where the robins sing ; that don't make the house damp, I know, papa ; or perhaps you think it is best to sell the horses, and my little pony, the best and loveliest horse in the world, or else— Oh ! what is it, papa ? You look as if I hadn't guessed right at all." Cora threw back her still wet curls from her warm, bright cheeks, and laying her hands on her father's knee fixed her eyes upon his face.

"No, Cora dear, not exactly. Is that door closed ? How it rains ; but it is comfortable here. So you had a pleasant visit, eh ? Yes ; Robin is a good little horse, and he shan't be sold, nor the old robin's nest cut down. Yes, child, I have something to say to you to-night, but you look so like a child, sitting here with your crazy, curly head, and peach-blossom cheeks, that I think that it would be better to send you to bed."

"But I am not a child, dear papa ; I shall be eighteen next winter."

"Why don't you say that you was seventeen last."

"Well, it is all the same. Now tell me, papa, just as if I was an old lady of twenty-five."

"Twenty-five ! You are a silly child, Cora ; too young to talk to of marrying ; but, as you say, you will be eighteen next winter."

"Marrying, papa !" Cora blushed, and looked into the fire, while she dragged Frisk from his soft resting-place, with some words that sounded like "come here, Frisk—poor fellow ! What nice silk ears you've got—good old dog !"

But as the dog made no reply, and the Colonel still looked into the fire in the same silent way, Cora grew serious too, and her anxiety increased as the something for which she had been looking did not come ; nothing, indeed, for a half hour, seemed to be heard but the same pattering of rain, the same flooding down the pipes, and the shovel and tongs noises which Sophy made in the kitchen, unless the fire crackling and clock ticking could be called an accompaniment. To all these sounds Cora listened until she grew weary, so she looked at the mantel-piece and exclaimed, "It is now past nine, papa ;" then pushing aside the dog, she seated herself higher up on her father's knee, and while she put her fingers through his hair, she said,

"Now tell me, papa, what I can do or say to make you happy?"

"Cora, my child," her father replied, "I want you to make yourself happy."

"I happy ! Oh, I am so now—never—*never* half so happy." The blossom-hued cheek grew brighter for the speech, and the lips that uttered it slightly trembled.

"My dear girl, you know that before long I shall be an old man, and you will want some one to love—some one to love you—some one that is able to give you a beautiful home, and protect you after I am gone. Don't look so solemn, my love, I hope to live many years yet, but we cannot foresee events ; and now that your hand is sought by one so well qualified in all respects to make you happy, why, my daughter, is it not worth consideration ? I wish you to possess not only the comforts of life, but all its luxuries."

At this moment the door flew open, and Judy appeared in a white slip shorter than her day dress, while she exclaimed, "the roof's smashed in !—Lord what can we do ! It is an 'arthquake, and nothing else, that's a coming."

"Shut the door," thundered the Colonel, "and tell Jim that the scuttle-door has blown off, and then if you show your head here again to-night I'll"—

But Judy did not stop to hear her destiny, but slapped up stairs with her wet feet, and that was the last heard of the "arthquake" or Judy that night.

"As I was saying, Cora," the Colonel went on, "we are, as a family, respectable—*highly respectable*—but poverty can crush the proudest, and you must not feel its blight. You know, my daughter, that you have always had the tenderest care, and

that you could not struggle with adversity. Why do you hide your head so, Cora? Why don't you speak? Would you not some day like to marry well—very well—Cora, a man who would support you in style, such as you was born for?"

Poor Cora, how little she was thinking of style or of wealth. How little she cared for the model husband her father talked about. Where was her young heart now? It had flown like a fluttering bird to the bosom of her young lover; it had nestled for protection where it would ever, ever rest. Her breast swelled, panted with agitation, and up in her throat came choking, rising sobs that she could not keep down.

She thought of Mr. Clarendon—she could not help it—and yet she had not heard his name. Might she not be mistaken? She lifted her eyes, and, with a ray of hope, said,

"Oh, papa, my fears overcome me, of whom were you thinking?—of any one especially?"

"Yes, my daughter, of—Mr. Clarendon."

"But oh, dear papa, you do not know that I do not love him; that I never can love him." Cora's whole face kindled with emotion.

"Cora, my child," said the Colonel seriously, "do you love another?"

"I do—I *do*," whispered Cora, while her head again sank.

"My daughter, God forbid that you should think of a son of Roger Wilton—a villain, and my worst enemy; no poisonous reptile crawls the earth that I more heartily shrink from than this man; and it is enough for me to know that this young man who has infatuated you is his son."

"Oh, then, dear papa, let us never part; I cannot be given away to Mr. Clarendon; oh, tell me so; I do—I do love Rufus Wilton as I can never love another."

"My daughter, this young beguiler has bewitched you; his father was artful, too: oh, Cora, had you known the mother of this young man, when a girl like you, she——but I desist; this tale is not for your ear. He comes from a stock that inherit fascination, but will this secure your happiness? Can you live upon the property stolen from you—take as a marriage portion the estate that you ought to claim as your inheritance? No, my child, it is no *ignis fatuus* I pursue. You shall yet possess it by the power of *right*, unless he is leagued with fiends that keep it from me.

"But this is not all. I hold another record of his deeds; they

of his will, my father had disinherited me, and given Roger Wilton his whole estate. But I returned, not too late to recover the old man's confidence, to receive his dying blessing, and by another will, which he directed in his last moments, my rights were restored. He died immediately after affixing to it his trembling signature. I was, however, but partially avenged ; I inquired for her whom I had left, as my heart's fondest treasure,—they told me that she was the newly wedded wife of Roger Wilton. The excitement of those terrible moments come over me even now ; I fell insensible by the corpse of my father, and was carried to the bed from which I did not rise for the period of a month. Roger Wilton appeared, at that moment so critical to me, beside the dead father, and his now senseless heir. Witnesses procured in those hurried moments, proved unworthy of their trust, and they yielded to the bribery of the Satan who tempted them to flee. The will was sought for at the proper time—none was found but the one that bestowed the estate upon Roger Wilton."

"Oh, how dreadful!" murmured Cora, "tell me now of my mother, dear papa?" The weeping girl spoke tremblingly.

"Would that I had never known but her! She was a second cousin, and an angel in goodness and beauty."

"Where were the witnesses to this will, papa?"

"I know not where they went, my daughter. On the recovery of my reason, they could not be found, and my story was not believed. I had but a few short hours to establish my innocence, and to reinstate myself in his confidence, before he hastened to repair the injury by calling these witnesses and executing a new will, restoring to me the inheritance, and soon after I received his dying blessing."

"Did you not meet Mr. Wilton after your recovery?"

"Yes, Cora, and that meeting he will never forget. Since that day we have been foes."

"Oh, tell me of that young girl," said Cora.

"Oh, she is buried in my memory with the things of the past—no, dear Cora, we will talk of brighter things than my life can picture—of a marriage which will place you beyond the contingencies of my uncertain fortunes. Can you not think now favorably of this connection with Mr. Clarendon?"

"Oh, no, I cannot—no, no, I cannot," Cora's eyes betrayed

the feeling with which she spoke. She had, for the first time, realized the pecuniary situation of her father, when for the sake of wealth he had almost blinded himself to her happiness. For seventeen years she had been the comfort and joy of his heart; and now he was willing to part with her, that she might be *rich*, and possess the comfort which perhaps he could poorly provide for her. She shut her eyes, and thought how terrible was the sacrifice he asked. Her father saw how deeply she grieved, and inquired "If it was a dislike of Mr. Clarendon, or her love for Wilton, that made her unhappy?"

"Oh, both, papa," whispered Cora; "thank God, the son is not like the father. Oh, *he is* noble, *he is* good. Oh, will you not make your child happy?"

"Go to bed now, my child—you shall not marry against your will—your agitation distresses me. Try to sleep. Kiss me, darling—good night."

Cora dried her tears and went to bed, but not to sleep.

After Cora's departure, Colonel Livingston raked over the ashes on the hearth, and leaning forward on the mantel-piece, sat long in deep thought. He then took a lamp and proceeded to his own room. Stepping very softly, lest he should be heard, he first looked out upon the dark night, and heard the pattering of the rain, which seemed more gloomy to him now that he was alone; but the fire was yet flickering on the hearth of his chamber, and he returned to that, as the most cheerful view. He felt then a little worried about Cora, and slid quietly to her door. She had left it ajar, and he looked in; she was leaning her head on her hands by the bureau, at which she stood. The sight of her pensive attitude troubled him, and he opened the door, and called the gentle girl by name. She came forward, when he clasped her in his arms. Cora laid her head against her father's breast, and sobbed like a child. He placed his hands on her golden curls, and then held her again fondly to his heart.

"Heaven bless you, my daughter," said he, "God knows I feel for you. Let your poor heart rest; you shall never be urged to marry, where you cannot give it to the husband that you wed."

"Dear, dear papa," said Cora, her eyes full of tears, and her voice choked with sobs, "I am very sad to-night."

"Don't feel so longer. I will tell Mr. Clarendon that you

reject him ; so now be quiet, darling, all shall be right there."

The parting was renewed, when the Colonel went again to his chamber. Cora had promised to go to bed, and he was comforted. After closing his door, and for the first time locking it, he looked stealthily about him, and then went to an old trunk of papers ; far down beneath the pile he laid his hand upon a small, red morocco miniature case ; he looked around him again, and opened it, brushed the ivory, and seated himself by the light, wiped his glasses, adjusted them, and looked upon the picture it contained, with eagerness. It was a likeness of a beautiful girl with chestnut-colored hair, eloquent dark eyes, and a mouth of rare sweetness of expression. The head of the lady sat proudly erect on a pair of perfect shoulders. The artist had painted the whole with life-like expression. This picture he had not looked upon for many years. He viewed it long. He was again with Rosa Neville. Edward Livingston was no longer the silver-haired Colonel, with the pencilled brow and stern, cold aspect ; he had gone back for the space of five-and-twenty years ; he was lost in a dream of the past. He did not, however, "press it to his lips"—he had no fancy for kissing cold ivory—but he gazed upon it as though it stirred up his old fresh soul within him, and renewed the youth now gone with the love that had once been his life. An hour or more he held it, while the lamp grew dim, and the rain drops fell, and the blaze burned blue, making more sad to look upon the long-buried relic. But he felt that it had no place among the things of life, and to its grave he would reconsign it. Again he put it far down among the old yellow papers, in the old brass-nailed trunk, which he locked securely.

Before going to bed, Edward Livingston looked at himself in the glass, and as he did so, felt that his face, with its deep lines and grey earlocks, was a poor match for the young face that he had just hid away.

"And I have kept this picture," he said, "through so many years ! Where, oh God ! is the original now ? If through me she has suffered poverty—privation—how great is my crime ! May Heaven have preserved thee, unparalleled Rosa !" Was this secret interview unnatural or marvellous in a man of nine-and forty years ? Those who can look back into life's vista thus far can best answer. Can *they* say that the silent, lonely hour never wins them on the same swift journey—takes them

from the railroad of dust and strife—over fields of green, under skies of azure—by the sound of murmuring streams, where they first drank life's choicest nectar? May not also the man whose life is spent in that which satisfieth not, in the dusky hour of twilight—in the silence of midnight—even in the broad glare of day, among a circle that call him father and husband, take a quiet, stealthy trip to dreamland, and in love's first delirium, live o'er again moments unforgotten, though the fair girl that makes up his ideal is not his own faithful wife; but like the interview of Edward Livingston, with his long-buried love, the door of his dormitory must be shut, while in dreamy silence, they pass the flowery portal.

Cora had a sleepless night; her free, bounding step was now slow and pensive, as she came over the staircase to meet her father. The rain-storm was over, and the clouds in the west were breaking away, showing patches of blue, and those that hung heavily yet in the east, had a silver edge. It was, however, a lowery morning, in-doors and out, and although Cora found everything bright, nice, and comfortable in the parlor, for Judy improved in her part of the housekeeping daily, still the clouds of disappointment hung heavily over her spirit. But yesterday she awoke to feel the gladness of a mere existence,—she cared little whether the sky was blue, or the beautiful rain-drops fell, for around her were ever brilliant the hues of the rainbow. It was not that the morning beams were always bright, that the moon ever shone in undimmed splendor, and that at the star-lit hour sweeter fragrance went up to heaven around Cora's bower-like home, but her once bright spirit seemed to bathe itself in liquid gladness.

But this morning, for the first time, her sweet playfulness had vanished, the very hair on her forehead seemed to wave less gaily, and her eyes had a clear, pellucid look, beneath their heavy lids, that spoke of a night of tears and suffering. Yet she met her father with a tender smile, and his morning kiss was affectionately returned. She listens patiently to Sophy's account of the disasters of the last night's storm, of all the leakings and drippings, of the broken scuttle-door,—and worse than all, of the "dreadful actions" of Judy, who "tracked in and out in the wet, worse than an Irish child, letting in more water than she left outside."

But to all this she seemed to listen, and even told Judy that she must not be so careless; and Judy saw at a glance that

"Miss Cory was not well ;" so she made no reply to Sophy, not even a slant on "niggers in general," but kept her black eyes on her young mistress when she went into the kitchen, wondering what could be the matter. But she soon came to the conclusion that she took cold going to the party in the rain, and that it was no wonder, such an "*awful night* !"

Cora was not distressed about her father's inclination, that she should marry Mr. Clarendon, for this she thought she could easily overcome ; but that he should deem it desirable, in a pecuniary point of view, for her to seek for wealth in a marriage, distressed and grieved her, and, more than all, crushing to her heart was his utter refusal of the suit of her beloved Wilton.

She thought with pain, for the first time of their poverty, or limited circumstances. She had heard some talk of mortgages and sales, but regarded it as the common talk of business men ; but she now thought of these conversations in a different light ; she now knew why her father was so often downcast, and that heavy debts were pressing upon him ; but then she wondered why he had been so regardless of expense in all that gave her gratification,—and more than all, why he had suffered the purchase of such extravagant dresses for her brief visit in town, when he knew that she would be as well suited with simplicity. Even with her youth and experience, she saw how wrong, how useless, and how wicked, was the outlay of money which they could so ill afford to spend ; and especially, how wrong it was to incur debt for such luxuries as afforded them no real happiness. Poor Cora sighed, as she had often done, and for the same reason—she saw that *pride* was the basis of all their pecuniary troubles and that it might occasion them deeper trials than they had yet known.

She now for the first time feared, that to Mr. Clarendon her father was deeply indebted, else why, she asked herself, had letters and visits received from him, appeared so sensibly to relieve his spirits ?

She thought that it would be a dreadful sacrifice to herself and to her father, to give up dear Villacora, her old sweet robin bower, her childhood's home,—but how much better to do this, to even struggle with poverty, than to be so heavily indebted, without the hope of payment ; then, too, there was, she thought, in her father's mind, this long deferred hope, but was it not, she asked herself, a mere dream, and would it not prove as delusive. She tried to think what she could do to aid

him, and if she exerted herself in some way, whether with their present income, and such economy as she had never practised, that he might not pay his debts, and in another home, live comfortably. Cora was ill prepared for such a change, but it seemed a delightful alternative to that of marrying her benefactor.

But while in imagination she had levelled almost every barrier which stood in the way of an honorable independence, without retaining their place, she encountered one difficulty which she could not surmount. Her father's pride again rose in the conflict; how could *he* live in an humble abode, and not feel the wormwood of gall and bitterness? She knew that he felt humiliation in their present sweet home, for he laid claim to a prouder one, the seat of his fathers. For the first time she felt how shallow was the source on which they were sustained; she knew that her father's slender income afforded them now their chief support, and that he was liable at any day to lose that dependence. She now felt that he had been deeply wronged, and her heart went out in love and pity for him. Cora felt a willingness to suffer even privation for him, and a consciousness that they ought long since to have reduced their expenses, and have prevented the accumulation of debt, the amount of which, she knew little of, for delusive and chimerical seemed to her the hopes on which, for more than twenty-five years, her father had been sustained. She feared that heavy sums had been borrowed already, and that Mr. Clarendon was their chief creditor. She dared not approach her parent on this subject; she had been always kept blindfolded to these matters, and now feared that she should shock him by an allusion to them. She could commune with no one in her troubles, which made her more miserable. Cora also knew that Wilton would soon come home, and seek her father; she had no way to warn him, and she feared painfully the result of a renewed application, after the neglect which his letter had received at his hands.

"Perhaps," murmured Cora, "it is for my sake that papa clings to Villacora, and that false appearances are kept up to save me pain and mortification; he thinks that I have not philosophy enough to enable me to sustain the loss." Cora looked out from her window upon the now desolate grounds of her home, as each sacred stepping-stone by which she had marked her years since infancy, and tears dropped at the

thought of the place going into other hands. Yet, she believed that, if it was necessary, she could cheerfully resign it, and live happily elsewhere, if her father had only equal fortitude. By sudden light, she saw how frail had been the pillar against which they leaned,—that pride had been their great support. She knew that it greatly aided in making their hearth hospitable, that it had kept the old family silver bright, and the venerated family pictures free from dust or stain; that it brought the choicest wines to her father's table, and furnished his guests with such viands as their limited circumstances could not have afforded.

How respectable and elegant, also, had ever been the personal appearance of her father; for who wore finer broad-cloth, or more spotless linen? On his gold sleeve-buttons figured the family crest, and the head of his gold-mounted cane bore the same impress, above the initials of his name. Cora knew with what little fortitude her parent could bear a descent on the ladder of fortune—what a wild dream his life must have been, and how much happier would have been his fate, had he actively employed himself in some honorable and lucrative business, instead of wasting the remnant of her mother's little fortune, while indulging in visionary hopes of coming prosperity. She had become, in a few brief hours, older and wiser in her views, and revolved in her mind the dilemma in which she was placed, and how she could best extricate herself without serious injury to her father. She saw now that she was the magnet that drew Mr. Clarendon to Villacora, and if the expectation of winning her hand had been his real aim in assisting her father, that her own position was embarrassing in the extreme. She resolved to talk to the latter, and induce him to reveal frankly to her the state of his affairs, and to show him that she was able to endure much—everything for his sake, and to clear him from debt.

The alternative from poverty, that of marrying his creditor, brought to her mind painful agitation. She choked down the thought as fast as it swelled up in her bosom; poverty seemed bliss to it; besides, had she not given her heart, her virgin love to another?

While at breakfast, the morning after the painful conversation of the evening previous, all these things came through her mind; though as usual, she went through with her quiet duties, and met her father's wants, and answered his anxious

queries for her health. The day passed as it began, sadly, and so on for days after.

Each succeeding one, Cora resolved that before night, she would open the subject of her thoughts to him ; but March came in with its days of flickering sunshine, and she had not done it. Her father, when at home, seemed much absorbed in thought, and though he looked more tenderly than ever upon her pale face, still he was less communicative, and she had not courage to approach him, when he returned from his official duties, harassed and wearied. He was not at home much now, and often remained in town for days together, and when he returned, she felt it her duty to cheer and amuse him.

The early days of March had passed. The fresh grass blades were springing on the lawn, buds were swelling in their delicate green folds, and a few birds had come home to their summer nests. Cora had been out during one of these soft mornings, wandering listlessly among the covered up vines, and half-dead, half-fresh-looking parterres, that in two months would be gay with blossoms ; she had found a jonquil and a bunch of blue hyacinths, that had already come to light, through the influence of the spring sunshine, and as she went on, her eye caught sight of some daffodils and heartsease blossoms, all of which she secured as beautiful treasures. But she gathered them passively, with none of her old joyousness. The gardener saw her out again with real pleasure, and he secretly hoped that, when the roses came, her pretty face would grow fresher and bright, as it had done ; for all the household had noticed how pale she looked, and attributed her delicate looks to going to the city, where Jamie said people all grew like sickly cellar geraniums.

Cora brought in her flowers, and arranged them on the mantel-piece mechanically, more as a natural thing for her to do, than as of old, a sweet and pleasant task.

Night brought home her father, and Cora had looked for him with more than usual eagerness.

She had received, the day previous, a note from Wilton, saying that as he had had no reply to his letter to her father, his case with him looked dubious ; but he begged her with all the fervor of a lover, to remain constant to him, and expressed the sanguine hope that in a personal interview he could effect more with her prejudiced parent. Cora's lip quivered, and her

heart beat with love and apprehension as she read this brief note, which she first held to her lips, and then locked up as a sacred treasure. To-night her father had brought home letters and papers to read, and as soon as tea was over, sat down to peruse them. As he took up a business-like looking document, his look was anxious, and his cheek pale with excitement. He tore it nervously open, and perused its contents. Laying it hastily down, he arose and paced the room with a distracted air.

Cora observed him, and sat quietly as long as her nervous solicitude could allow her to do ; then approaching her father, while she looked earnestly in his face, said,

"What is the matter ? any new trouble, papa ?"

"Oh, nothing," said the agitated parent, "go away now, child."

"But something has happened—you are distressed—pray tell me." Cora's tears now fell on his hand.

"Bring me a glass of wine, my love, I am not well," said the Colonel.

Before Cora could procure the wine, Colonel Livingston had thrown himself upon a sofa. He was faint and deadly pale. She opened a window and held the cordial to his lips, which, after drinking, seemed to revive him. During their moments of agitation, Mr. Clarendon had arrived, and while Cora sat with a fan and camphor bottle by her father's side, he entered the apartment. He saw the condition of the Colonel, and observing the open letter beside him, guessed the cause of it. He had been removed from office. He had known that his chance of retaining the situation that had yielded him a moderate salary, depended entirely upon the wind of political favor. That breeze had now shifted. He had watched the vane, and had anticipated that the Colonel would be displaced.

"I am sorry to find you ill," said the latter, taking the extended hand of his friend.

Cora then greeted their visitor with some embarrassment, and again took her seat near her father.

"Something smells of camphire," said Judy, at the same time, either to the peacock or Sophy. "I guess I'll go and see what's going on in t'other room."

So, much to Cora's relief, Judy came in opportunely, which gave her occasion to turn her pale face from the observant

eyes that were fixed upon her, and ask the inquiring "little help" if she wished to see her.

"Yes, ma'am," said Judy, opening the door wide, so that she could get a stronger smell, and a general look, which convinced her, as she afterwards told Sophy, that "the Colonel was in a fit, and that the doctor was a bleeding him."

Cora accordingly went to the door, when Judy asked her "what kind o' greens she liked best ; that there was a gal at the gate with some."

Cora didn't think much about greens, or care whether cowslip or dandelions made their way into Sophy's kettle for the next day's dinner, and it being rather a premature inquiry, her reply was as brief as Judy's exit, the latter being in haste to tell the cook her master's condition.

As Cora returned, more self-possessed, to her father, the latter said, attempting to rally, "Let us have tea soon, my daughter. We are delighted to have you with us, Mr. Clarendon. I have been a little dizzy, I believe—somewhat dyspeptic."

"You look better now, papa," said Cora, still intensely anxious, for she saw little chance of ascertaining now the cause of her father's excitement of mind.

"Yes, my dear," said her father, "much better. You have seen that an appointment has been made to fill my place, I suppose, Clarendon," he continued.

"I have," replied Clarendon, "I anticipated the change, and used my influence to prevent it, but to no effect."

"Papa," said Cora, eagerly, while her lips whitened, "are you removed?" She clasped her father's hand, which lay on the sofa.

"Yes, yes, my child," said the Colonel, seriously, "the news startled me, that's all. I ought to have looked for it."

"It is of very little consequence, Colonel," said Clarendon, with a careless manner. "You can do better than that."

"I only need patience, I know, Clarendon ; my fortune is tardy in coming. The ship sails slowly, but will yet be in—richly freighted."

"God grant it, Colonel."

Cora now sat looking into the fire, as pale as a statue. Such an expression lighted her features as Mr. Clarendon had

never seen them wear. It was not grief, it was not despair, but more like resignation. He kept his eyes on her averted face, until she looked up; he then appeared not to notice her, for he saw that she was grieving deeply. Mr. Clarendon had heard from her father of her refusal of his again proffered hand, and had resolved to abandon Villacora altogether. But real feeling for the Colonel now sprung up in his breast. His visits had been hitherto selfish, but his sympathy was now genuine. He said little to Cora, but when he addressed her, his tones were very kind and gentle. She thought that she might possibly interfere with the conversation of the gentlemen, and quietly rose to leave the room. As she did so, Mr. Clarendon followed her to the door of the opposite room, and, as he opened it, said in a low tone,

"Give yourself, I beg of you, no uneasiness, Miss Cora. Your father is a little disappointed, but he has friends, and all will go well yet."

Cora bowed her thanks, and passed out. She knew that they were now penniless, and that her father was heavily in debt, and actually she feared, homeless, but for the mercy of Clarendon. At this moment she was kindly disposed towards him—he was certainly friendly, she believed, towards her father, and she hoped disinterested in his conduct. The thought of being more heavily indebted to him, caused her much anguish. She remained absent an hour.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Clarendon tried to soften the disappointment of the Colonel. He told him that he was aware that his situation was painfully embarrassing, but that he could still rely on him as a friend.

"But I can no longer pay you even the interest on my debt, Clarendon, and I see no prospect of redeeming my place, or of even prosecuting further my suit," said the Colonel.

"I shall attend to the latter. I intend, for several reasons, to defer my trip abroad."

"My poor daughter, how can she bear poverty?" murmured the Colonel, with feeling.

Mr. Clarendon was silent. Cora had returned, and heard her father's last words. She took her old seat beside him, and, with a smile that lightened the eyes, evidently heavy with weeping, she whispered, "Don't distress yourself for me, dear papa; we can be as happy anywhere else as here; we

shall not suffer. I am not unhappy." Mr. Clarendon walked across the floor. He felt himself an intruder, and the communion of father and daughter too sacred for the eye or ear of a listener. He saw the hand of the Colonel raised to the young head that bowed on her father's breast, and tears roll from the eyes that dwelt so fondly upon her. The scene made him uncomfortable, and Cora's pensive attitude and tones distressed him.

"Does she," said he, bitterly, "prefer toil and poverty to a union with me? I will watch her struggles with both, and then test her regard for me. I do not look for her passionate love, I almost believe her incapable of it, for any one; but I have set my heart on this alliance, and I will see what effect trial and obligation will produce in her." Thus Mr. Clarendon ruminated, while with pain and mortification he witnessed her situation, and saw her evident indifference to him. It was a great relief to his mind that Wilton had been discarded by the Colonel. He felt that his hopes were proportionably greater for the absence of his rival, and he trusted that Cora would at least feel her dependence upon him, and if he could not win her love, he wished her to feel, to her heart's core, her indebtedness. Clarendon returned to town the following morning. Cora was not to him the same being that he had seen a few weeks previous, in her joyous, brilliant loveliness. She was now pale, pensive, and dejected. Too young for even sorrow to waste away, she was not to his eye less beautiful. Her grief only awoke in his breast more tender interest; and he felt much encouraged that when she became aware of her father's bankrupt condition, gratitude to his benefactor would awaken also some love in her breast.

The nature of his feelings had somewhat changed towards her. Chagrin and indignation mingled with his real preference for Cora Livingston, she had slighted him, and given her heart to another, and evinced her repugnance to an alliance that his vanity told him few of her sex would have declined—for could he not offer to the woman of his choice, position, wealth, and such brilliant advantages as few could present? Added to these, his love, that had never before met refusal, had been cast aside as a worthless thing. He was more than ever incited to conquer her stubborn opposition to his suit, and his will, even more than his love, urged him on to the accomplishment of his wishes.

CHAPTER XIX.

Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge.

BYRON.

RUFUS WILTON came back to the country in April. After Cora had left New York, time hung heavily on his hands, therefore he resolved to seek the pleasures of an opening spring on the Hudson, where he hoped to meet Cora, and to have an interview with her father, which, perhaps, might result in their engagement with his consent. The budding loveliness of nature brought springing hopes to his heart. Insensibly bee, bird, and blossom affected him joyously; and by the side of swelling brooks, on the tops of beautiful hills, he wandered with a hopeful spirit; still he craved sweeter companionship than an Eden without Cora could have afforded him. His home was, as usual, unsocial and gloomy; and his father reserved and uncompanionable, Uncle Peter's pleasant temper alone bringing cheerfulness to their board. His own room overlooked the Villacora woods; and often among the fresh leaves that embowered it, he fancied he caught some glimpse of Cora on the piazza or lawn.

On the night of his arrival, he passed and repassed the grounds, hoping to see her. He had no idea of the change that had brought tears and paleness to that soft, young face. On returning home, he wrote both to Cora, and to Colonel Livingston, requesting an interview with the latter.

Wilton's request to Cora agitated her much. She received it while on the avenue, where she met the messenger. On again entering the cottage, she observed her father reading one received from the same hands, which he tore in fragments in presence of the bearer, and threw to the ground. This expression of feeling on her father's part, gave Cora no courage

to refer to her own communication, though she secretly determined once more to see the writer.

Mr. Clarendon was now more than ever closeted with her father, and she knew that his cause was soon expected to be tried. He was, as usual, devotedly kind to Cora, but had studiously avoided any opportunities of meeting her alone; and having been assured of the Colonel's acquiescence to his suit, and of his evinced scorn of Wilton's, he hoped yet to subdue the inclinations of the cold and proud girl.

Cora had persuaded her father to sell his horses, and to give up their cottage and servants, in case he was defeated in his action; and she had resolved to support herself by some exertion in an humbler home. She carried the note of Wilton for some time, jealously hid, but finally came tearfully to her father, and begged "that he would consent to her speaking with Mr. Wilton, when she would bid him farewell, and tell him that all was at an end between them."

The Colonel was much annoyed and disturbed by Cora's request; he thought that silence was her best reply, and was indignant that the "presuming young man" should ask so "improper and absurd a favor."

But Cora thought that it was only natural that he should wish to hear from her own lips, why she had not written to him; and she plead so earnestly to see him once more, that her father petulantly consented to an interview, while he would remain, he said, in the outer room.

"No, dear papa," said Cora, gently, "I wish to see him alone, on the walk."

Colonel Livingston looked in amazement at his hitherto yielding, retiring daughter. He saw not how terrible had been the struggle in her heart to resign her lover, and how strong was the wish now to soften to him the blow of separation. He looked again and again upon her wistful face, and at the workings of the features so eloquent with grief and tenderness, and wondered at the change in his playful, bright Cora. She did not plead in vain. He let her go, while she promised to give up Rufus Wilton, and to try to forget him, if he would not consent to her loving or ever marrying him.

Cora turned sorrowfully away. That evening, at dusk, she walked on the outer lawn, where she was soon accosted by her impatient, adoring young suitor. He had long awaited her coming in agitating suspense. He had heard the fate of his

note to the Colonel, and had little hope of seeing Cora after its scornful reception. How changed she now looked to him, her face so wan and pale ! He could have kissed her soft, sad eyes, as he would have dried the tears of a weeping child. She had never seemed to him so young, so infantile in grace, and so eloquent with feeling. The copse beneath which they stood, was already verdant with leaves, and sweet with ever-greens. The eyes of Cora, as she gently withdrew a moment from him, told him much ; he passed her arm through his, and they went down a path that led towards the river.

Holding her hand as if it would soon struggle, like herself, to be free, he asked her, " If she had not one word of hope for him ? "

Tears were, at first, her only answer ; then, as drop after drop was dried, she chokingly said : " Rufus, we must resign our dream—it was too bright for us. "

" No, my darling girl, it was not too bright or too sweet for us. You are all I love on earth, and if I am as dear to you, God forbid that the feud of our parents should separate us. "

" But, dear Wilton, I have come to say—to say—*farewell* ! Is it not better to *say* it, than to write it ? I thought that *you* would think so. "

" And have you come, too, my Cora, to say that you are going to marry another ? "

" Oh, no," said Cora, shudderingly. " I thought that I could reconcile you, but I can't say much after all. We were so happy in New York, that I did not dream of so much sorrow. I wish—oh, I wish that you had not been a Wilton. "

" Would you have me other than I am ? " said the young man, reproachfully.

" Oh, no, no ; but my father is so prejudiced, and I cannot tell you why. "

" I ask no reason why, dear one ? But I offer his daughter an honorable name, one untarnished, so far as my knowledge extends, and if not one as proud as the name of Livingston, I can only say, I trust that he who wears it may, by a life of honor and usefulness, give it brightness. I do not despair of winning a fair fame, and with your hand for my reward, what toil, what perseverance could not do for us, love and happiness would effect. No, Cora, I cannot give you up. "

"But you know not all that influences my father."

At this moment a sound was heard within the bushes near them, when a voice whispered audibly :

"Would you wed the child of *him* who stole away the mother that gave you birth—and you, Cora Livingston, the son of *him* that made you penniless?"

Both Cora and Wilton shook with agitation ; for a moment the trembling girl clung to the bosom of her lover, then pale and statue-like, stood motionless, while through the bushes he started to find the source whence came the words of such strange import. But no person or visible thing was there, and he returned to Cora's side, paler perhaps, but unintimidated. It was now dark,—the stars were bright, but night was fairly upon them. Wilton silently clasped the form of Cora, and while he pressed his lips against her forehead, said,

"Regard not, my own loved one, these words so wild and strange ; I wish to separate you from the *past* ; I wish to look upon you, my angel, Cora, as the rainbow of my sky—my hope, the promise of my manhood. Why should the past affect *our* destiny ? Be patient—trust in me—I will not dishonor you with a name you cannot wear proudly ; give me but the years and cannot I be at least a *Clarendon*?"

The tone of Wilton was sarcastic and bitter.

"Choose no model on earth, dear Rufus—one is given us, pure and holy, for a pattern."

"Pardon me, if I spoke bitterly, Cora ; may my aims be more exalted, and I be, at least, free from the petty feeling of jealousy. A *name* ! yes, there is something in a *name*. Cora I know naught against the name of Wilton ; for the love of God, tell me has it ever been dishonored."

"Oh, Rufus, my father tells me a long tale of injury ; and he suffers pecuniarily, which embitters his feelings, and gives poignancy to his enmity ; he feels that your father has wronged him of his birthright"——

"Cora," interrupted Wilton with spirit, "if he had, I would disown him and his name ; but I know that the title to the property he holds, has been investigated and pronounced valid. But Cora, some day, this must all be mine—then, oh, then, *you* will share it, own it—can we not thus compromise this claim?"

"But my father is so proud—oh, he will never consent to this connection."

"Cora, tell me, is your father poor?"

"O yes," whispered Cora, "but he must not know that I have humbled myself to lisp it."

"And you—you, my loved one, may suffer privation?"

"Yes, if this suit results not in his favor."

"And if it does not, oh, how proudly would I cast that inheritance at his daughter's feet. It is a princely estate, and with it, we shall at some future day enjoy prosperity; until then my resources are sufficient; I have enough to commence life, with a profession, under favorable auspices. Cora, I offer you competence and my love."

"Perhaps if you see him you may overcome his present feelings, and induce him to forget—the past."

"*The past!* and what is this bitter past, that it must come up like a hideous monster ever in my path?—the bugbear of my childhood, and the nightmare of my dreams! Cannot we crush it—trample it down, and in a new flowery existence, find unalloyed bliss?"

"Oh, Rufus, we anticipate too much in life; I am now under a heavy, heavy cloud, and I fear that I shall never see light. I try to soar beyond these trials of life, and in the love of duty, find happiness; but I have clung too fondly to the hope that must now be torn from me."

"If you cannot soar then in full hope, my dove, fold your wings, and trust in the heart of him who will brave all things for you; who will love you through ills, who will love on till death." The lips of the lover again pressed the cheek and eyes of his idol, and silently they proceeded homeward, their hearts too full for words. The dew was falling heavily, causing fresh fragrance to arise from early budding things. A new moon shed over them a glimmering silver light, but their faces only revealed their sorrow; their voices were silent. After reaching the cottage where Wilton reluctantly resigned Cora, she entered the gate, and he turned towards home. His mind was calm, but pervaded with gloom. The words of the strange voice, that came upon them so stealthily, deeply annoyed and harassed him. He had disguised his indifference from Cora, but the idea that there was a spy in ambush intruding upon their privacy, aroused his pride and indignation.

"And had Colonel Livingston," he asked himself, "any influence upon the fate of his mother; had *he* stolen her from her home and her child?"

His frame shook with the power of his feelings, and indig-

tion was mingled with the heart's anguish, produced by his interview with Cora. Rufus Wilton was impulsive and ardent, he had a delicate sense of the beautiful and good, and he aspired to high attainment in moral and intellectual cultivation ; but the graces of his heart and mind were but in their germ, and he was yet undisciplined for trial. Cora trembled at the thought of his now seeking her father ; she knew that by the touch of her finger she could calm his turbulence of feeling, but she feared the result of his temerity, should he, in his present mood, approach her deeply prejudiced parent ; for what could she expect him to receive but disdain, and perhaps insult. Still this interview he had resolved to seek ; he had made no calculations on the result, but his heart could, not rest satisfied until he had seen and conversed with Colonel Livingston on the subject to him, of such thrilling and momentous interest.

During the absence of Cora, on her evening stroll, with Wilton, Mr. Clarendon had arrived at Villacora. He found the Colonel alone, and though cordial as usual, he seemed much abstracted in mind. He was himself in high spirits ; he had gained a cause in which he had been ambitious of success, and which had cost him much labor. On an examination of the Colonel's case, his hopes grew fainter of establishing his claim, though he still gave him encouragement. The case kept him in constant intercourse with the Colonel, and brought him into nearer intimacy with his family, while the obligations he conferred, became daily greater, and more apparent to Cora.

Since his disappointment in the effort to lure back Flora to his home, which, for a while, he made the passionate desire of his heart, he had become more than ever reckless in his habits, while his house was a resort for idlers and seekers of pleasure, whom he found difficult to shake off, and of whom he became, in time, wearied.

The fascinating guilelessness and witchery of Flora, who once lent such a charm to his leisure hours, he had ever missed, since her absence, and that void, he felt desirous to fill, while, at the same time he adorned his home. He became tired of his bachelor life, which convivial excitement failed to brighten. He wanted that calm sunshine that a pure-hearted, lovely woman could only shed on his hearth, and cautiously, but surely, he felt that he was now gaining his object.

Finding the Colonel dull and taciturn, he proposed a game

of chess. The proposal roused him from his reverie, as he was revolving in his mind Cora's infatuated attachment, as he deemed it, for Wilton, though anxious to keep the knowledge of her interview with him from Mr. Clarendon.

He had repented that he had given even a reluctant assent to the meeting, and grew irritable and impatient each moment of her absence.

"Your daughter is not at home?" said Mr. Clarendon, seemingly intent on his game, "visiting, I suppose?"

The Colonel made, what he considered a master move, while he said, "'Y—e—s, she is out," then looking at his watch, rose, and went to the door of the kitchen, and called Judy, telling her to go and find Miss Cora, and say that her father wanted her.

"Allow me to seek her," said Mr. Clarendon.

"No, no, Clarendon—let us finish this game."

Mr. Clarendon soon allowed his opponent the game, which somewhat soothed his irritability. As the board was put aside, he heard Judy coming in, and jumped quickly from his seat, hoping to prevent her ingress—but in vain, Judy was too quick for him, and as she entered the parlor, exclaimed,

'They's most here—they walks mighty slow, and have, I guess, a heap to tell, by the way they come.'

"Go into the kitchen, girl, you have too much to say—go directly."

The Colonel was alarmed, and he showed it. Judy had vanished, much to the disappointment of Mr. Clarendon, for his curiosity was deeply excited by the remark of the loquacious child, who seemed to him both omnipresent and well-informed. But without paying heed to the Colonel's nervousness, he took his hat and approached the outer door.

"Don't go," said the Colonel, "she will be here presently."

But Mr. Clarendon did not seem to hear, for he had already met Cora; she did not observe him, but with a noiseless gliding step was coming up the avenue; she had nearly passed him when he arrested her attention. Her head was down, and her eyes on the gravel-walk.

He accosted her, and without exhibiting the jealousy that he felt, said, "Cora, we missed you, and I feared that something unusual had kept you out, and came for you."

Cora made some low reply, while she recognized Mr. Clarendon, and proceeded more hurriedly.

"Are you not afraid to be out so late *alone*, Miss Cora?"

"It is quite light," replied Cora. Her head and face was averted—she feared that the traces of tears were visible, and avoided the gaze of her companion, though the young moon would have scarcely revealed them. She attempted to rally and to shake off her gloom, but made a poor effort, and met with bad success. Her father heard her coming, and when he greeted her, he said so many things, and was so delighted to see her one moment, and so flurried the next, that Cora was glad to make a hasty excuse for her absence, and flee to her own room.

Mr. Clarendon had heard her sad tones, and witnessed the Colonel's ill-disguised excitement, and grew puzzled respecting the mysterious walk, about which no one seemed communicative but Judy.

The Colonel was in positive ill-humor, and what more tried the patience of Mr. Clarendon, a half-hour had elapsed before Cora re-appeared. When she did so, she devoted herself chiefly to Frisk, while she seated herself in a dark corner. As she passed her father on her entrance, she said, in a very low, sweet tone,

"Pray be cheerful, papa; I cannot be so to-night."

The Colonel made her no reply, but anxiously watched her movements. Cora saw his disturbance of mind, and again came forward, while she said,

"Shall I play chess with you, papa?"

"Allow me to challenge you, Miss Cora," said Mr. Clarendon; "your father has sadly beaten me, and I wish to retrieve my character."

"Yes," said the Colonel, quickly, "play with Mr. Clarendon; I am dull to-night; there is the board." Cora dreaded to face the light, and especially to sit *vis-à-vis* with Mr. Clarendon, for she knew the observation that she would encounter, however delicately he might seem to disguise it; besides, she was conscious that she could not fix her attention upon the game, and that she should betray her absence of mind.

"Would you not prefer music," said Cora, so touchingly, that her appeal was understood, and her proposition acceded to with politeness on the part of Mr. Clarendon. He accordingly followed her into the adjoining room, which was not lighted, excepting from such rays as were borrowed from the other.

Mr. Clarendon opened the music and turned her music-stool,

when Cora took her seat, and played at random such pieces as he selected, without apparent thought or interest.

"Will you sing?" said her admirer, as he bent over her for reply.

"Excuse me to-night," said Cora, rattling hurriedly and discordantly over the keys.

"I do so reluctantly," said Mr. Clarendon. "Perhaps," said he, in a whisper, "you can sing 'The Lover's Adieu.'"

Cora's white cheek crimsoned perceptibly, even in the dim light; then, as her color receded, with calm dignity she rose, without a word, and seated herself in her old corner upon a lounge. She leaned her head against the wall, upright, and without concealment. Her profile was fully visible where Mr. Clarendon sat. It was full of repose and beauty. He saw that he had offended her, and that she exacted the most delicate respect, and that he had intruded too far when he trod upon the ground she held sacred. He was so far right, but he knew not how keenly his words had played upon the chords of a bruised spirit. She had returned from her walk only comforted by the reflection that she had obeyed her father's wishes. She would have suffered less, perhaps, had she written to Wilton, but the thought of so parting was acutely painful to her affectionate heart. Sad and weary, she had no spirits left to contend with jealousy, and she returned to her old seat, careless of the feelings of him who had, as she thought, without delicacy, wounded her.

Her father observed the movement, and said, "Why do you stop, Cora?"

"I am tired, papa."

"As you please, then," said her father, who commenced conversation with Mr. Clarendon.

The latter knew that he had offended Cora, yet made no effort at reconciliation, but with the Colonel devoted himself the rest of the evening in talking politics. Cora felt relieved. She was left by herself, and as she was seemingly unobserved, she laid her head upon the arm of the sofa, where she again and again reviewed her intercourse with Wilton. Sometimes she saw him before her eyes (as she sat in the lonely corner), as he first appeared to her, with sporting coat and cap, gun or rod in hand; then, with his own pleasant smile, when he promised not to shoot her birds, he came on her vision; but more sweet than all, in her remembrance, were the hours of delicious

memory when, with mutual love declared, they had passed long hours together. But to-night the scene was changed; sorrow had cast a sombre veil over the meeting of the lovers, and the day star of hope was shrouded in darkness.

Her heart beat fearfully as she thought of his again encountering her father, for she knew that his spirit could ill bear taunts, or what he would deem aspersion of his family. She feared the conflict, but thought it best that they should meet. Thus, with her head bowed, she mused abstractedly, until her thoughts roved from Wilton and his love, to Mr. Clarendon. She had felt so indignant at his allusion, that she was little disposed to-night to feel indulgent to his course, and wondered how he had possessed any knowledge of her errand out. She did not think that the years that had made him familiar with the play of the human countenance, and the keen observation that had perfected the study, had enabled him to fathom with skill the emotion hidden to the careless observer. Thus had Louis Clarendon discovered all that Cora would have concealed, while circumstances corroborated the opinion he had formed, and fully convinced him that, with her father's consent, Cora had been forth to-night to meet Rufus Wilton.

The evening wore away in unusual silence. The loss of Cora's winning gaiety was sensibly felt. Mr. Clarendon would have gone to her side, and attempted to restore her spirits, but this course was hardly conformable to his nature.

To-night his self-love had been wounded. When flattered, he was ever obsequious and devoted, but he felt that he had now incurred a slight, and that with haughty indifference Cora had received the courtesies which he had extended her. Too well satisfied with himself to doubt the propriety or delicacy of his own acts, he could only censure the pettishness of such as evinced displeasure at them or his words. He was indignant that she had again met Wilton, and especially with the knowledge and consent of her father. He was puzzled as well as angry. The Colonel's pecuniary obligation to him, made him assume, unconsciously, a power and an influence which he did not possess, under the delusion of the magnified views of his own importance, inferring that Cora must glorify him, as he stood high in station, powerful in wealth, and exalted as her father's liberal benefactor.

But when he found that, notwithstanding the service rendered her father in his destitute condition, such as no one else

would offer, bought not one more smile from the sad, sweet lips that thanked him instead, with falling tears, he resolved that penury, if not love, should bring her to his feet. While angry with himself for the zeal with which he pursued her, her indifference but piqued his vanity and roused his pride to conquer one whom he could not woo. Cora's dejection irritated rather than saddened him—her smiles had been his food, and now, though she strove, with all her natural sweetness, to wear them for her father, cold courtesy was all he could obtain as a reward for his devotion.

The day was fast approaching, when Villacora must pass into other hands under the auctioneer's hammer, Mr. Clarendon having determined, unless she relented, to possess himself of the property under his mortgage. The heavy indebtedness of the Colonel, he felt, warranted him in doing so; and as he saw that no advantage accrued from his leniency, his indignant feelings prompted him to teach her, by experience, the value of his past favors.

A day or two before the time appointed for the sale of the premises, Mr. Clarendon sought an interview with Cora. Her late avoidance of him roused his vindictive feelings, and as he addressed her, his commanding person was drawn up to its full height, while his, dark, grey eyes glowed more with triumph than love.

"I regret," said he, "to inform you, Miss Cora, that circumstances compel your father to part with Villacora. For your sake, I might have caused a delay of this sale—indeed, I would now do it, at this late hour, if you in the least appreciate and value my motives in so doing."

"Mr. Clarendon," said Cora, while her eyes filled with tears, which she struggled to conceal, "I trust that I am not ungrateful, but when you lift from my heart this great weight of obligation, you most oblige me. Let Villacora be sold—let us live in a hovel, before we add the weight of a feather, to the debt that can only be cancelled by a heartless compact."

As Cora spoke, she had never looked prouder in her loveliness. Her face was ashy pale—her features transparently beautiful, and her form more expanding in its proportions.

"A heartless compact!" said Clarendon, scornfully. "Is it this I require of you—you whom I have sought as a lover sues his idol. You who have received devotion such as the

proudest have envied. Well, then, make that 'heartless compact' and save your father from ruin and degradation."

"No, Mr. Clarendon, my father would not buy a kingdom at the price of his child's happiness."

"You have said enough, Miss Livingston," said Mr. Clarendon, with a lip white and quivering with indignation. "I would have saved you this affliction, but if you suffer from poverty, know that Louis Clarendon would have aided you. I am engaged for your father's counsel in his suit against your *valued friends*. So far I will aid you, for the rest you must look to the enforcement of the law."

Cora's large blue eyes seemed fixed on vacancy, but in them Clarendon read no fear. She bowed assent, when the door closed on her haughty, enraged lover.

Cora sunk on a chair as he left, and, with her hands clasped, tried to compose herself to meet her father. For herself she cared little, but she had refused to make a sacrifice for *him*. For *him* who had been her all in life—her only parent—now poor and borne down with suffering! Was this right? Was this true nobility? she asked herself. Had she not better have died than not to have saved him this dreadful hour?

Poor Cora struggled with her heart, and called her reason to the conflict. Lifting her eyes to heaven, she murmured. "In *Thy* eyes, O, God have I erred? Hast thou given me a soul to perjure? A young heart to cast away as a worthless thing? shall I *sell* my very being for the gold that will buy but my mortal part a home, and my father the bread and roof of dependence? No! I will sooner make him a pauper. Yes," she murmured, while the big tear-drops fell, "dear Villacora must go; and my flowers, and the birds I've nestled since my childhood, must have other care than mine. And poor papa must give up his old home comforts—this is the hardest thought of all. Oh, can he bear it?" Cora now sunk on the floor by the side of the cushion, where her head fell overpowered by feeling. Thus she lay, while around her white cheek and brow, soft, bright curls gathered in wild disorder. Her attitude was like one bereft of hope. A moan of anguish came from her lips, when the door opened softly, and Mr. Clarendon stood beside her.

"Cora," said he, "forgive me; I would avert this blow. Rise, I beg of you, and spare me the sight of your suffering."

On the instant Cora stood upright. With one hand she

pushed back the stray ringlets that had covered her cheek, while with the other, she laid her hand upon the arm of the sofa, as if to nerve herself to speak.

"It is true, I suffer," said she, "for my father's sake—but I have no time to grieve, even for him. Action is my only remedy ; let me go to him—do not impede my footsteps."

"Yes, I must," said Mr. Clarendon, standing before the door. "Give me one word of encouragement first, Cora, and your father shall be independent, and you rich in station, wealth, and love."

"Mr. Clarendon," said Cora, with mournful dignity, "respect *yourself*, if you have none to offer me. Would you take me as you would a deed or mortgage, as security for my father's place ; if so, what bond have I, that I may not be sold again as a piece of merchandise ? No, Mr. Clarendon, go and seek a wife who has more to surrender you. The half, the *more than half* of her you would wed is gone ; my heart and soul is in the keeping of another."

"Cora Livingston," said Mr. Clarendon, "Rufus Wilton shall never marry you. Come to the trial when I shall plead your father's cause, and exhibit the character of Wilton's family, and then see, if you will become the wife of one, who calls his father *felon*."

"You may call him, Mr. Clarendon, by a name worse than felon, and the son believe in his father's innocence. Has not God given to each man a separate identity—one mortal part, one soul, one being ? If so, why is one individual to be merged in the vices of another. No, thank God, in Rufus Wilton I could never see a guilty parent, though the world proclaimed his father worthy of a scaffold."

The child-like Cora had vanished, and in her place stood the high-souled, liberal woman, whose opinions were founded alone upon her own convictions. She was not one to pin her faith upon another's word ; or hang upon the skirt of a world's opinions ; in her pure, guileless heart, her lover stood stainless of his father's imputed sins ; and though she believed herself for ever cut off from his destiny ; though she had voluntarily resigned him from a sense of duty, she would not hear another cast upon him an ungenerous sneer, and remain silent.

Still Cora Livingston was less the stoic than the feeling woman ; and before she had ceased, she had wept burning tears.

Thus Mr. Clarendon left her, still unrelenting in her firm decision. He had resolved to sell the place, if she still remained unconquerable. He resorted immediately to the Colonel, and acquainted him with what had taken place with Cora, and of his resolution, unless she confessed herself willing to make reparation for the injury done his feelings, and in the place of scorn, give him her confidence, and, at some future day, the pledge of a wife's honor and fidelity.

Colonel Livingston had thought himself prepared for this crisis, which he had seen impending; but it came upon with a death-like blow. He fell insensible, and when Cora was summoned to his side, she believed that he was dead. Her wild shrieks of anguish, Mr. Clarendon heard; they pierced his soul, of which he was not wholly destitute, and as he caught a view of Cora kneeling, in supplication to Heaven, to spare her only parent, he denounced himself as the cause of all their suffering. For had he not drawn his victim, step by step, into the web, from which he could not extricate himself alone?

The suffering parent finally revived, and called his daughter nearer to him. "Cora," said he, "what is your decision? Shall we go forth poor and homeless; or, will you accept, for us both, independence from the hands of our creditor. I am too old now to work, and you are too delicate, too young, to suffer from poverty. Still we may succeed on the trial—hope is yet left us—but if all fails, what then?"

"Then I will work for you. If I sacrifice myself it must be for a nobler purpose than for food and raiment, when God provides for the raven, and clothes the lilies of the field. Was it to purchase an angel's seat in Heaven, I could do no more than give myself away. My father cannot ask this of his only child."

"But, Cora, it is easier to talk of working, than to do it. We are neither of us fitted for toil or labor."

"Which is worst, to toil with the body, or to die by inches, pining away the soul in gilded slavery? No, let us go. I can sell my jewelry, and that will aid us until we, in some new place, can earn a living. Fear not, we shall be supported. By to-morrow night we shall be ready. Rouse yourself, dear papa, dismiss the servants; I have paid them weekly. Judy shall go home, and Sophy, poor old Sophy! has saved her earnings. I will be all-in-all to you, and we will soon forget

our old bird home. You know that I have my mother's diamonds, and our old silver, which is mine—*family pride* we must sink in this time of trial—we will save it, if we can, but if the plate must go for bread, let us resign it cheerfully. Promise me that you will aid me with your smiles."

"What will the world think? They will say that I am a fugitive bankrupt."

"No, not if your possessions, your all is left behind."

"And you will not accept the alternative?"

"Wait here one moment, papa," said she, while she fled hastily to her chamber. "See here," she cried, "I have enough to sustain us for six months, at a quiet home in the country. You gave me the avails of the sale of dear Robin, and here it is. My winter's jewelry is as precious as ever, and once started, I feel that we shall be sustained. We can gather together what there is of value, that need not be sold, and we will appoint some one to take the remainder in charge for us. Will you go?"

"Where?—where?—into some dirty country village! At some low tavern, or at a starving widow's pinched-up board, where we can get food and lodging! But it will not be long; my suit will soon come on for trial."

"But lawsuits, papa, often eat up more money than they supply. Let us begin to work for the present, and if God sends us a store for the future, it will then be time enough to enjoy it. One of our poets says, you know, in his sweet Psalm of Life,—

"Act—act in the living present,
Heart within, and God o'erhead."

"But what, child, can I do befitting a gentleman? I must not, Cora, compromise my position because of my reverses. Perhaps I can obtain some office from the government."

"It is all slavery, this office-seeking, papa; you must employ some one to secure it for you; you are not independent, as I wish you to be. You have education, head, and hands, and so have I, papa; now all we want is *resolution* and *energy*."

"Well, child, if we must go, it can't be helped. Sophy can see to all we leave behind, and pack up the old pictures; don't let them face this sacrilegious sale. By the blood of the Livingstons, I never thought to come to this!"

The Colonel sunk despairingly in his old leather arm-chair, and wept like a child.

Cora did not stop to cry ; she went actively to work, and with the help of Sophy, who gradually woke up to the state of things, aided her young mistress in her preparation to depart.

For two days they were very busy, and were at length in readiness. In the meanwhile, Wilton had called upon Colonel Livingston. The day following Cora's interview with Mr. Clarendon, he resolved to seek the Colonel, and by a last effort with him endeavor to accomplish the great aim of his life. Imagination brought before his mind his poor, loving Cora, urged into a marriage that she hated, to gratify her father's pride and ambition. He shivered with a feeling akin to an ague chill, when he thought of the stiff Colonel, and of his expected freezing salutation, if he received any, and he tried to chain down the spirit that would rise in rebellion, should he meet with scorn and insult. He little knew the state of things at Villacora, and that the very sight of a Wilton was enough to turn into gall every drop of blood in the veins of Edward Livingston. And that the presumptive heir to his own estate, as he viewed it, and had viewed for twenty years, should have the daring to seek the hand of his daughter, maddened and enraged him.

"There's a gentleman in the library," said Judy to the Colonel, as he raised his head from the hands into which it had sunk.

"Who is it, Judy?" said the Colonel, alarmed, for he felt that every finger in the universe was pointing at him.

"Miss Cory knows him, I guess," said Judy.

"Go to her, Judy, and help her. I will see the gentleman." The Colonel wiped his red eyes, rubbed his glasses, and after tucking in his bosom frills, with as stately a step as if he owned the manor bearing his name, he proceeded towards his library.

The next moment Colonel Livingston and Rufus Wilton stood face to face. The meeting was chilling and overpowering to both. The Colonel had not met the latter since he parted with him in his sick room, and now an instinctive feeling of obligation came painfully over him ; then the audacity of the young man, and his probable errand, rushed upon his mind, and for a moment kindled it with fierce resentment.

With a self-possessed, but modest address, Wilton accosted the Colonel, and by his fascinating manner disarmed him of the anger which he had felt on his first recognition of one so disagreeable in imagination.

Against every established feeling, he listened; for something in the face and voice of the speaker held him motionless, though, with each word from his lips, he grew more violent in opposition to his declared errand. The earnestness and emotion evinced in the speech of the young man, gave him no doubt of his sincerity; and when, with fervor of language and honest candor, he spoke of his attachment to his daughter, and his wish for a favorable reception of his suit from her father, the Colonel manifested no opposition. He was seemingly dumb, and abstracted.

The manner of the Colonel gave Wilton less courage to proceed than if he had even betrayed violence of feeling; but had the latter known that he whom he addressed was rapt in a vision of the past, that on his hair, brow, and eyes, the Colonel's intent gaze was fixed, regardless of the import of his words, still greater would have been his despair.

For a while the young man awaited courteously his reply, but as the Colonel's head bent over the cane he held, in silence, he again spoke.

"Colonel Livingston," said he, "I have declared my wishes, and trust that you have listened favorably—without disapprobation."

The Colonel roused himself, and while his eyes were fixed with a magnetic charm upon the speaker, he replied, as he believed that he could never have done to a Wilton:

"Sir," said he, "I regret your errand; my daughter is as far separated from you as God could divide two earthly beings. Your attachment for each other is but lunacy on either side. I cannot hear the subject alluded to. No, young man, there must now be an end of it. I discard you peremptorily, as her suitor. We are opposed as a family. I have no personal enmity—to—to you, sir; you have been of use to me. I would aid you, could I, consistently, in any—distant way, but may Heaven avert any connection between our families."

"My dear sir," said Wilton, composedly, "I do not wish to unite the heads of our families; your daughter and myself are of another generation, and furthermore, sir, I would suggest to you, that her happiness for life is somewhat concerned in this

matter ; I do not speak of my own, that is of no importance to you."

"I can take care of *her* happiness," said the Colonel stiffly.

"I believe, sir," replied Wilton, in a tone musical and low, "that *I* can do it better."

The Colonel's glance fell, he for the first time despised himself for his forbearance ; but soon overcoming the spell that bound him, he averted his eyes, and said sternly,

"I can have no conversation with you upon this subject—I forbid your intercourse with her, wholly, and for ever."

"I am prepared for all this," said Wilton, calmly, "but pardon me if I persevere ; my position with you, sir, is not agreeable, but on that account, I will not desert *her*, for I consider Cora *mine* by the gift of a Higher Power ; she has given me her young heart, and by God's will, I will keep it."

"Young man, you have certainly assurance. I have prided myself that no one was ever treated inhospitably within my doors, but I never expected to see a Wilton cross its threshold."

"But a Wilton *has* done so, sir, and I trust without harm, and whatever you may think, Colonel Livingston, I say it with respect, sir, I consider your doors not dishonored by the entrance of a Wilton. When I offer your daughter my hand, I do it not cringingly, and trust, aside from my preference for her, that there is nothing dishonorable in thus restoring to her, at some future day, the estate of her grandfather."

The allusion to the contested property aroused all the slumbering bitterness of the Colonel.

"And what?" said he, with a sneer, "in case the law restores it to her father, will it be your wish to regain it to *secure* it to you, and to your heirs? Ah, blind fool that I was, here speaks the artful tongue of Roger Wilton."

Resentment now kindled in the eye and cheek of the young suitor ; with a form erect, and a face beaming with honest pride of character, he looked in the face of the taunting Colonel, and said,—

"I expect no such result ; your suit will prove fruitless, in my opinion ; I can hardly blame you for your bitterness of feeling, but on the *dead*, not on the *living* should the blame of disinheritance be cast. It was certainly a strange disposition of a son's inheritance, but I see not how that culpability can rest upon him upon whom it was bestowed."

"You do not see it," replied the Colonel, scornfully. "And

if you do some day see that upon *him* a darker door will close, than poverty alone could lead him to,—would you then seek the hand of the daughter of Edward Livingston?—link your disgraced name with that of one never sullied with dishonor?"

With a pale face, and indignant quivering lip, Rufus Wilton stood before the enraged Colonel; then striking his fist with force upon the table, he exclaimed with a voice trembling with insulted pride:

"Another man could not have so spoken, and *stood* before me. I hold myself no dastard, nor of a race despised or niggardly, and if you insult me with such language, you'll find that there is spirit in the veins of a Virginian Neville, if you falsely deem that you can trample on a son of Roger Wilton."

"What do you know of your Neville blood?" questioned the Colonel, turning pale.

"What do *you* know, sir? I ask," said Wilton, watching the stern face of the Colonel.

"I know nothing good—nothing good of it, young man."

"Tell me, did you know my mother?" said Wilton, facing the exasperated Colonel.

At this moment, Cora entered the room, and pale as the petals of the lily, glided towards her father and lover. She saw at a glance their agitation; with her eyes full of tears, she laid one hand on each, and said, "Let me not occasion anger between you; Rufus, regard charitably the prejudices of a lifetime; and, papa, don't wound his feelings—do him justice, I implore you."

"The law will soon do it better; go, young man, and know that I spurn your suit—that I cast in your teeth your insinuations. Did I know, your mother? Ask the God of Heaven where she is, for he alone knows. A Neville! so there is *honor in a Neville!*"

Colonel Livingston's face was now purple with rage and excited feeling. Cora's tears and suffering had calmed her lover. Regardless of her father, he clasped her to his heart; then, kissing her brow, released her, while a parting blessing came suffocatingly from his lips.

After the departure of Wilton, Cora said to her father:

"I am almost ready, papa. We have done much to-day, and to-morrow can leave for New England. That sweet village through which we passed last summer, will be a nice place for us."

"Yes, Cora, change of air will benefit us. It will look quite well to travel in the summer; there is nothing humiliating in this—natural at my age to prefer retirement. Then, after the trial, we can come back—with triumph—then, where will be the lordly Wiltons?"

Cora was regardless of this oft-repeated tale of expected wealth, and, overcome with fatigue, and agitated by the brief interview with Wilton, she was scarcely able to contend with the responsibilities resting upon her. But she attempted to soothe and cheer her father, and went again to her chamber, where she resigned, as she believed, with submission, her dear little room, with all its fond associations, and looked forth with a sad adieu to the old trees and sunny lawn, where, in childish glee, she had, for so many years, winged merrily with bird and butterfly.

The morning of departure came. The following day the premises were to be sold, and Cora thought that the sooner her father left them, the less sorrow he would feel. So, after numberless directions to Sophy, and old faithful Jamie, the last key was turned to the travelling trunks, and the last fold adjusted in the simple dress that adorned the fair young wanderer, as she was about to go forth on the arm of her less resolute parent, for an untried destiny.

Cora thought sometimes that her father did not realize his real situation, so rapt was he in his dream of ideal prosperity.

But Cora fully did, as she counted over her bills, and calculated how far they would apply towards their support, until they could earn something for the future. She had set out on her journey, and dared not look back. Yet, that setting-forth was sad and slow.

But while Cora had made her preparations, Mr. Clarendon had returned to New York in a state of harassing excitement. He had gone further than he had intended. He had done and said what he would have given worlds to recall; but, he argued, that no man could have patiently borne from the woman that owed him so much, such coldness, and haughty indifference. His spirit would not now allow him to retract his words, and Cora and her father were suffered to abandon Villacora, and surrender their furniture into the hands of the officers of the law. So, the same day that found the patient, resolute girl and her depressed parent in humble quarters, in a

small New England village, the premises of the Colonel, and all therein contained, passed into the hands of Mr. Clarendon, who had become the purchaser at the sale.

Through a friend, Cora had disposed of much valuable jewelry and other articles, which had really supplied her purse better than she had expected. So, after her arrival, she arranged her small apartment, in the corner of a quiet cottage where they boarded, and more cheerfully than might be supposed, considering the contrast it afforded to her own little room at home, which the old elms shaded, and where the birds still lingered, though she who loved them so well had fled. But there was now a pretty lilac bush under her window, and though there was nothing in the yard but some chickens and two Guinea hens, Cora looked at them with wet eyes, and was pleased with their pretty speckled feathers. But the old white-washed walls looked cracked and poor; and the window-panes small, and full of scratched names; and the green paper curtains made a rattling that set her father nervous. Then the yellow painted floor, with its strip of carpeting around the bed, looked cold and desolate; and when Cora saw her pretty face twisted awry in the little tipped-up glass, that sent her head a good deal higher than she felt disposed to hold it, she saw how out of place she was, and if she didn't cry outright, it was because her father had sat down in the painted rocking-chair, off of which one arm tumbled, and was looking at her with an expression that seemed to say—"Is this better than to have married Mr. Clarendon?"

But their reveries, such as they were, were disturbed by the slapping sound of feet, on the painted floor, when, without rapping, a girl came in, and said,

"I guess you didn't know tea is ready. The men's done, they come when the horn blows, but we women folks eats afterwards."

The Colonel stood upright, stiff as if he had been frozen, but Cora bowed pleasantly, and motioned to her father to go down to tea at their first private lodgings. The table they found neatly spread, and the bread and butter quite inviting. Neither could any fault be found with the honey, the cheese, or the baked custard, sprinkled with nutmeg, set around in blue cups by each plate, with a spoon in the middle.

Still, neither Cora nor her father could relish the entertainment, and the former was much relieved when good Mrs.

Smith ceased to urge them to taste the different varieties, and the girl in puffs and horn side-combs withdrew her staring eyes, to regale them on her own well-filled plate.

The first night at the Widow Smith's was dreadful to the father and daughter, but as soon as tea was over, they went to look about the village, and every one of whom they inquired respecting it, told them how lucky they were to get such a nice place to board as at Deacon Smith's widow's.

But in the country Cora could always find something beautiful to look at. There was a pretty water-fall right in the heart of the town, that foamed and sparkled in the departing sunlight, and venerable willows drooped their branches, under which rosy-cheeked children romped and sang merrily; and the sun went down behind valleys as green, and hills as thickly wooded, as the shores of the blue Connecticut could boast of.

Pensively, on the arm of her father, Cora wandered till dark, thinking amidst all these new scenes still—more fondly than ever—of him she loved, who was now so far away. But the Colonel had but one idea, and that was the approaching trial. This anticipation threw a bewildering veil over present horrors, for he little realized that he was actually poor and homeless, but rather imagined that, as he was travelling, he must, of course, submit to inconveniences, and as a gentleman, should look heroically upon temporary evils. So upon retiring for the night, with the aid of a high stool, he climbed up into the feathered slanting pile, that was built upon an inclined plane for a bed, and after propping his feet securely against the foot-board, went to sleep, and dreamed that he ate from gold-plate in Linlithgow Castle, and that his daughter Cora wore the guise and ruff of the beautiful Scottish Queen.

But Cora slept less quietly. She saw things as they really were, and she trembled for her father when his dream of anticipated success should no longer buoy up his spirits, and the suit should be terminated, for she feared the worst, and indeed for her own sake she did not care to impoverish Wilton to enrich herself. She hardly knew what result she did wish—she only felt that her heart was heavy and sad.

But Cora became more reconciled to the Widow Smith's, for habit had accustomed her to many things, and she found that she was surrounded by people of kind hearts, and though the girl with horn side-combs and yellow hair would burst in

to her room without knocking, and the good widow tease her to eat hot "slap-jacks" till she feared dyspepsia and nightmare, still she had the common comforts of life, and felt that God had thus afflicted her for some wise purpose.

She had been about the village one morning, to engage some music scholars, and came home pleased with her success, when her father announced his intention of leaving for New York the following week, to be present at the trial of his cause.

Mr. Clarendon was satisfied with the exercise of his revenge upon Cora, and devoted himself with his usual zeal to preparation for the trial. The time appointed had at length arrived. He had been untiring in his efforts to procure the essential testimony, requisite to prove the existence of a later will, than that by which Wilton derived his possessions. But in this he failed, much to the disappointment of the Colonel. His main reliance was therefore now upon some old family servants, who swore to its existence. After the witnesses had been examined, and the evidence on both sides introduced, the case was submitted to the jury on the part of Mr. Wilton's counsel, who represented his client's possession of the Livingston estate lawful and honorable as ingenuity and eloquence could make it appear. Mr. Wilton's character was challenged to be proved in any respect impeachable for the space of five-and-twenty years. Not a finger, said his counsel, can be laid upon a transaction of his, sullied with even the color of suspicion. That he was called unsocial, of a morose temperament, and that he preferred a secluded life, he acknowledged; but that he was a man of perpetual gloom or a misanthrope, he denied; but even admitting the truth of the accusation, it did not follow that he was dishonest. Every man, he argued, had a right to choose his habits, and with Shakspeare for authority, he could proclaim

"Opinion but a fool, that makes us scan
The outward habit by the inward man."

and he saw no reason why the reverse might not be true.

He represented it natural and grateful in the patron of a devoted ward, to make him his heir, instead of a neglectful child, who deserted his parent, as had been represented, in feeble health, in the decline of life, and, by a career of proflig-

gacy thus forfeiting his respect—or, for his own imputed motive, to hunt up his Scottish pedigree, and the ashes of family grandeur, which could be found nearer by, in cots as well as castles. A dutiful son, he said, would have sooner remained within the pale of the paternal fold, and in the arms of dying love, have secured the substance instead of pursuing the shadow of ephemeral greatness. It was hard, he acknowledged, that a gentleman of Mr. Livingston's expectations and family pride should not have the means to castle his possessions, his family portraits, his heir-looms, and armorial crests; but still he should be congratulated, for while he lost the "local habitation," he kept "the name." He stated that it had been urged that none before had ever laid claim to a foot of this contested soil, but a Livingston—that even the ashes of his forefathers consecrated it to the plaintiff, while no one had ever owned an acre of it, since old Sir Robert, or Peter, or Grimes first settled it with their noble lineage. He would ask with the poet,

"What should be in that Cesar?"

Why should that name be sounded more than yours?

Write them together, yours is as fair a name.

Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well.

Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with them,

Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Cesar."

"It is not only the moonshine of a name that dignifies the claim of the plaintiff; his counsel has an interest in it not to be despised. He is neither without his Claude Lorraine visions, nor can be blamed for seeing enhanced charms in a diamond, richly set. With all his reputed love for beauty, the attractions of an heiress are not to be despised, by a gentleman of his luxurious tastes. Still, if reports were true, he had before sought false *mirage*, and before now *ignis fatuus* light.

"But," continued the counsel, "I have no time nor inclination to follow his wanderings, as they might be bewildering for a man of steady habits; yet, I cannot allow a client to be defrauded, for the sake of gilding his pathway, though it is true," he added, "that the counsel is to be pitied, for he is often so situated that, as an old French proverb goes, '*Il ne sait sur quel pied danser.*'"

Notwithstanding the gentleman was rebuked by the court, he seemed inclined to have a shot upon the counsel, before he

commented upon the facts which bore upon the case of his client ; but having ceased his fire, he summed up the evidence, which consisted chiefly of a will, properly executed in favor of Roger Wilton.

Mr. Clarendon then rose and addressed the jury, and so plausibly showed the course of duplicity pursued by the defendant, during the illness of his patron, that he excited the indignation and contempt of all who listened. That Edward Livingston was unjustly deprived of his inheritance, through the cunning and treachery of Wilton, was suspected by many of the spectators. The father's prostrate condition was set forth by Mr. Clarendon, while, like a Judas, Wilton sat by his bed-side, administering drops of poison to the soul of the dying man, faster than those of restoration to aid his bodily recovery, while, with obsequious devotion, he filled the place of the ungrateful absent son.

"Sharper than a serpent's tooth," he represented the tale to have rankled in the parent's heart, while insidiously the traitor crept into his affections, and worked out, inch by inch, his own pecuniary salvation.

On the borders of the grave, he represented that the old dying man was cajoled and duped into giving his estate to one who bore not in his veins one drop of his blood, while he disinherited his only child. This testimony, he said, was given by one who heard the incoherent utterances of the palsied sufferer. "This might," Mr. Clarendon argued, "be called, as it had been, but the ravings of insanity ; but he would appeal to every candid mind, if the disinheritance of an only son, did not look more like the act of a lunatic." He pictured the scene, when the first will was drawn and executed, and the trembling condition of the sufferer, whose fingers were held by him who gloated over the unexpected inheritance, while the signature was penned that gave the ward, instead of the son, title to the old man's possessions. Then the apathy into which he sunk after exclaiming, "God forgive me, if I wrong thee, Edward !"

With pathos and power, Mr. Clarendon represented the cause of Edward Livingston, and so glowingly exhibited the triumph of the successful intriguer, at the time of his patron's death, that every eye seemed to see it written on the face, now too deeply furrowed for the years of the man.

Then followed, in imagination, while Mr. Clarendon spoke,

the son's return, ere the vital spark had fled, until the joy, the remorse, the anguish of the old man seemed pictured on every brain, preparing them for the restoration of the son's inheritance.

"It often falls," Mr. Clarendon quoted, "that Right long time, is overborne of Wrong;" but he believed now, that the scale was turning, and that "some hidden thunder in the stores of Heaven" was yet reserved for treachery so base. On every point which bore upon the case, Mr. Clarendon enchained attention for a lengthy period. Curious, eager eyes sought for the countenance of Roger Wilton. Not an emotion of his mind was readable, unless the sarcastic curl of his lip betokened his contempt and defiance of the plausibility of the speaker. The effect of Mr. Clarendon's argument, was to excite suspicion of foul wrong on the part of Wilton; but having been for years in the possession of his estate, while no stain rested upon his character, no lip betrayed the workings of the mind. All that could bear favorably upon Colonel Livingston's claim had been presented, and such evidence had been adduced in support of it, as intercepted letters, now revealed, could show, of the confidence and love between the father and son at the time of their separation. And when Mr. Clarendon closed, the feelings of the audience, at least, had been enlisted on the side of the disinherited.

Colonel Livingston soon afterwards learned the decision of his case, which confirmed the claim of him who had held the contested estate since the death of his father.

He returned to Cora bowed down with sorrow, and crushed by disappointments, when she more than ever realized that her mistaken parent had sacrificed his energies, and wasted his talents, for a delusive dream. In her little whitewashed chamber, in the barely furnished apartments, where nothing external gratified the eye—where no delicious sound of music ever spell-bound the ear—where no sense was soothed by those exquisite gratifications that wealth furnished the affluent,—here she implored her dear father to look within, and examine his own heart, and see what grace it lacked to fortify himself for the heavy trials of his lot. She begged him, now that the great hallucination of his life had vanished, in stirring action to forget the past, and while he earned for himself an earthly maintenance, to press on for a higher inheritance than the world or its treasures could yield. By her gentle persuasion, and

unpretending example, she led him oftener than he had ever been, to the village sanctuary, where he joined in heartfelt worship, and for the time, knelt at the throne of his Maker, with an humble, contrite spirit, while Cora hoped that he had been led by Divine grace to the only and great source of consolation, and could say in his season of temporal affliction, "Thy will be done."

In pleasant weather, the father and daughter took long walks together, over the village of Goosegreen, and thus whiled away hours, that had been otherwise sad and solitary, for, as yet, they had neither of them procured any occupation; but rainy and gloomy days came, when they were confined to their cheerless rooms, where the sound of the rain on the low roof, the crowing and cackling of the poultry in the yards, and the continual dropping from the tongues below (the widow and the yellow haired "help," being on the committee of ways and means) furnished the only changes that rung on their ears, during many dull periods of their new existence.

But Cora was one that trifles amused when in her usual spirits; and now she omitted no opportunity to make her father laugh, if it was at nothing more ludicrous than at the saucy urchins who flattened their noses on the window panes of their low bed-rooms; and books that they had never before thought of reading, they caught up now with avidity, in the cottage at Goosegreen. The Colonel's greatest horror was of the intrusion of country people, for, as he had lived in his elegant retirement, he never thought that he could come under the same order of rustics, and shunned, with disgust, any contact with the "vulgar herd." And the villagers hated him and his proud airs, worse than he did them; but they loved the very sight of Cora, and there was not a child in the village that had once seen her, but delighted to bring her flowers, and the largest strawberries they could pick. The older ones gave the whole flag-stones to the Colonel, as they passed him, and the boys strutted behind his back, sometimes with their hands behind them, and then with a cane which they swung at measured distances, but if they saw Cora looking, the strut changed to a less dignified gait, and with faces as red as their garden poppies, they would sneak slyly away. While her father was occupied with a new periodical, Cora strolled out one afternoon to buy a ribbon for a hat, and thought she would look about the village for a milliner. So after going

through several grassy streets, all still as Sunday, and seeing no one but some girls through a fence, and some clerks with pens behind their ears, that had come out of their little-of-everything stores, to look at the beautiful young lady, that everybody stared at, with her white face and sunny curls, she finally found a small shop, with a window full of flaunting caps, bonnets of every shape, ribbons of any shade the glaring sun and flies chose to make them, and as she read in big letters, "Millinery—walk up," at the end, she mounted the big stone at the door, and went up stairs.

Behind a small show-case of varieties, from crimped ruffs down to garters and hair-pins, stood a girl that tended the shop meal-times, and society and prayer meetin' days, but on other occasions, the lady who owned the sign filled the station; but the girl not being able to find the color that Cora wanted in a ribbon, she went for a box in the next room.

But instead of the girl and the ribbon, out came from thence a portly figure in rustling silk, surmounted by a ball of something made up of lace ribbons, spiral curls, and wax-headed pins, on the sides of which were suspended some huge ear-rings, that met the fat shoulders beneath. That it was a head, was at length apparent, and moreover contained, to Cora's dismay, the self-satisfied face of their old housekeeper, Mrs. Jonson.

Cora might have escaped, for the milliner was at first occupied with examining Cora's new-fashioned mantle, but she preferred to face the dread evil, with all the courage the occasion demanded.

A mutual recognition took place, and Mrs. Jonson being so overjoyed to find that Deacon Smith's widow's new boarders were people that she knew, that Cora was forced to be civil, and before she could make her egress, was carried forcibly into the back shop, to have a private talk about matters and things since she quit superintending country seats for millinery.

"Well now," said Mrs. Jonson, seating herself opposite Cora, "if this don't look like old times; now *do tell* what sent you and Captain Livestone to Goosegreen? Why, Lord, how does he stand up in Widow Smith's cubbed up rooms? Only to think of it! its like Raby's Nights, only the Laddin ain't got no lamp to rub, to bring up the nigger, he! he! What changes we does come to! Some's up-hill, and some

down-hill, and then verses visy. I heerd the Captain had got reduced, and I had half a mind to give him a lift, but you know I left under peculiar circumferences, and he and I were never much of cronys. Well, Miss Cora, I hope you are comfortable at the Widow's, and that she don't pinch in your living. She means well, but sometimes her sass is short, he! he!"

"Good evening," said Cora, rising, while the color mounted on her cheek.

"Ah, but," said Mrs. Jonson, "it ain't society time yet, and the girl is in the shop. I want to ask you if you are coming to live with us, in earnest; or only to summer it; because that makes a difference with Goosegreen folks. Now the folks will call, if they think you ain't stuck up; but I reckon it was always nateral to the Livestones to be stiff-necked"——

"But I really must go, Mrs. Jonson, papa"——

"Let your pa go to grass, there's more on't, I guess, than he likes in Goosegreen, if he don't tread too high for it. Now just tell me about your city relations—pretty grand, ain't they? I heerd that you went to see 'em last winter. Now, I'm glad to see that you ain't a hanging on to 'em. If you are up in the world, why eat 'em out of house and home, if you want to; they'll like it; but if you are reduced like, keep clear of rich city folks, if they are your own brothers and sisters. Now I never had any that was so pesky grand myself, but I've lived where I've seen country folks that warn't so well to do, come to visit their country-seat city wintering relations, and it's ten to one they hadn't rather they had stayed to hum. Not that they hain't got any souls in their fixed-up bodies, for I 'spose there is one stuck away somewhere, but it takes such a splash of their buttermilk for the fashionable Five Avenue folks, and foreigners, and hair-lipped natives, that little is left after the skimings for the nice worthy people that they are always glad to see when they haven't anybody else. And, perhaps, 'tis better; for Lord, these retired genteel people are the troublesomest, after all. Jest as likely as not, they'll wear long waists instead of short, when the house is full of ambassadors and consullers, and ten to one they don't appreciate a pleny potentate, if they set alongside of 'em—and if they don't read the papers, why they don't know if all the lords in England was to arrive. Lord, I 'spose it's better they stayed to hum, unless they like

to see people help 'em off with the honestest smiles that they've put on, always telling 'em that they must come again, no time in pertekelar. I'm glad to see that you've had the sense to come to Goosegreen, for disagreeables are everywhere, and when you don't know where else to go, come to my shop. The Captain, too, tell him I never holds *grit*, and if he's down and I'm up, it's all the same in Goosegreen—but in the city the devil may take the hindmost.' ”

Cora would have escaped, if she could have possibly done so, but Mrs. Jonson's back was against the door, and she was obliged to listen, and how long she might have been imprisoned, it was impossible to say, if Mrs. Jonson had not caught sight, out of the window, of the minister's wife on her way to Mrs. Peabody's, with a small reticule on her arm. Cora was urged to stay just a minute, while she put on her bonnet, when she would go along with her, and introduce her to the Rev. Mrs. Pineapple; but Cora fled, with a hasty good bye, at the first appearance of a door crack.

She went home, resolving not to tell her father of her adventure, hoping that his unapproachable manners would keep Mrs. Jonson from visiting them. He had missed her sadly, and came out to the wicker-gate to meet her, when he led her to the little parlor below, and told her that he had resolved to take the editorship of the village paper, called by its former proprietor, “The Goosegreen Rainbow.” Then Cora told him how successful she had been in procuring music scholars, and that at least, she had little doubt of their making themselves a support, if it was an humble one. Thus Cora and her father existed in their poverty, under circumstances peculiarly trying to them both, and especially aggravating to the Colonel, when he reflected on the alternative offered in Cora's marriage.

But the change, so humbling to Colonel Livingston, had softened the pride of his nature, that had often exhibited itself in haughty arrogance; and Cora's sweet patience and cheerfulness through all their afflictions had doubly endeared her to him. At times when he saw her go sadly by herself, and while she leaned her cheek upon her hand—gazed in abstraction upon some crumbling wild-wood flower, he knew where her thoughts were wandering; and there were moments when he resolved to give up his old prejudices, and great as would be the sacrifice to his pride, and painful to his injured feelings, to consent to her union with Rufus Wilton. But she continued

silent and unmurmuring, and he could not approach a subject so painful to him, though had Cora done so, she might have been comforted.

But the new occupations which they each sought, for the present engaged their time, and required all the energy they could exercise for the duties devolving upon them. Weeks thus flew by—serenely, if without joyousness, or even happiness, when one morning a letter came, directed to the Colonel, which he opened with some agitation.

It ran thus:—

“WILTON PARK, *July, 18—*

“DEAR SIR:—Enclosed, I send you a letter intended for your daughter. May I ask the favor of its delivery to her unopened, trusting that the sentiments which I declared to you, will afford an apology for my presumption. My heart is *still* devotedly hers, and my only hope of happiness rests upon a reunion with her. God grant that your prejudices may be overcome, and that with your consent, I may seek her in what ever spot she may be.

“Respectfully yours, &

“EDWARD LIVINGSTON, Esq.

“RUFUS WILTON.”

“There is nothing dishonorable in this,” muttered the Colonel, “nothing clandestine. A strange young man—the letter is in my hands fortunately. She cannot receive it, excepting through me,” so the Colonel ruminated, while he tucked Cora’s epistle in his coat pocket, and walked up the grassiest and longest lane in Goosegreen. He did not as usual ask Cora to go with him. As he saw her tie her blue ribbons under her chin, and with her sad eyes look upon the pale image of her former self in the glass, then adjusting her hat over her soft ringlets, and go forth to give a morning lesson to a pupil, he hurriedly passed her, lest she should see the letter which was hid by folds of broadcloth in his pocket. After he reached the borders of a wood, he there seated himself upon a log, and examined the exterior of Wilton’s epistle to Cora. He would have liked to read within—he examined the address—the seal on which the writer’s initials were impressed, and through the folds, saw the closely written page, the sight of which, would, perhaps, cause Cora’s cheek to flush with happiness. The heart of the fond, disappointed parent beat with pleasure at the

thought of causing his afflicted child even one emotion of joy. "How much more then," he murmured, "the satisfaction of causing her heart to thrill with complete happiness."

Colonel Livingston tried, for the first time, to separate Rufus Wilton from his parents, to view him isolated from all ties of kindred, and thus to look upon him. He recalled his kindness to him in an hour of peril, he thought of his devoted love for Cora, and his manly perseverance, frank fearlessness, and the absence of all duplicity in his course, and as the brilliant face of the high-souled youth came before him, in this hour, his heart for the first time went kindly out to meet him.

What had wrought this change? He was absent from all associations of the past, and the utter desolation and deprivation of his daughter's lot, came up in bitter contrast with the cheerfulness of her former life. He saw how ungrateful he had been, for his beautiful cottage-home, and the fortune he had squandered, because forsooth, he deemed himself the inheritor of a prouder tenement and richer possession. He saw himself now bereft of all, and his daughter penniless; and pride, the foe, that had levelled them. He now saw his enemy in his true, and blackest colors, yet he had not set his foot upon the neck of his foe. Here at Goosegreen, he might welcome even a Wilton, as Cora's lover, but could he, in the eyes of world, that knew him, let her wed the son of his bitterest enemy. Yet her happiness demanded the sacrifice, and he walked back to the little wicker-gate, doubting and irresolute. Cora had returned home. He looked at her affectionately, but did not give her her letter. He saw that she had been weeping, and that her eyes looked hollow and sunken. He wished she had it, but if he gave it to her, would he not sanction the correspondence?

That evening, after his return from the office of "The Rainbow," he called her to him, and asked her if she was more unwell than usual.

"No, papa," she replied, "but I am a little wearied."

"Is that all, my daughter?"

"I wish I *could* look happy, for your sake, papa, but it is hard to forget those we—love." Cora's head dropped on her father's arm, and the long pent tears gushed forth freely—uncontrollably.

"I would rather that you would be so in earnest, Cora."

"That can never be, papa."

"What stands in the way of it, my poor child, my darling?"

"Pride and prejudice, papa," said Cora, in a melting tone.

The parent's head sunk upon the table, and thus pensively the child and father sat until the hour for retiring came. That night, by the midnight lamp, Colonel Livingston conquered his foes, and dispatched secretly a note to Rufus Wilton, in which he wrote :

"Your letter is undelivered. Come and give it to her *yourself*."

The following evening, the Colonel went forth again alone. Cora would have accompanied him, but he forbade her, and told her soothingly to dress herself with care, and to bathe her eyes, and look happy, for he had something bright in store for her. Cora smiled so faintly, and so indifferently smoothed her golden tresses, that her father, for the first time, fully realized the change that sorrow had wrought in his poor heart-sick child, and when he kissed her, and said "good bye," tears stood in his eyes as well as hers.

The next evening Cora sat down in a low wicket-chair, where she could see the lilac-bush, the only pretty thing in the yard, and attempted to read, but her father was gone, and she had now no fear of giving him unhappiness, so she indulged her grief, for this had been her saddest, most weary day.

While she thus sat, with her eyes on the setting sun, and her heart wandering back to the Hudson, she started—she heard a strange step—then a tap at the door—she looked up wildly, the next moment she was clasped in the arms of her lover. Joy had overcome fear, she thought it no wrong, and in transport she clung to him, while he whispered—"I come by permission of your father. Cora, you are mine."

The astonished girl wept tears of joy. How noble and beautiful seemed the proud form of him, who for one moment held her from him to gaze rapturously, tenderly upon her saddened loveliness, but to again press her proudly to his heart, while he called her his own!

Passionately he looked upon her pale, sweet face, until bright blushes kindled, and her sad, blue eyes melted in tenderness, till they fell beneath the rays that like a halo filled her vision.

What to Cora was now the poor, cheerless room, and scanty furniture of her new home! For her father, she could have wished for more, but for herself, bliss was within its precincts.

It was a late hour when the Colonel returned, and when he appeared, a change seemed to have been wrought within him.

His lip quivered, and sorrow rather than pride sat on his brow. His eyes were swollen as if with tears. The sacrifice of feeling he had made was felt and appreciated by the grateful daughter. In silence, she kissed the hand that he laid upon her young head, while in a husky tone, he blessed her and said "Ask me not to see him to-night, to-morrow I will be better prepared."

Cora, therefore, returned alone to her lover. The light of pensive joy radiated her pure face, and in the long hours that flitted by, in the little moonlit parlor of the poor widow Smith, no richer moments ever winged their flight beneath the crimson curtain in their early, dreamy hours of love, than were now enjoyed, this first night in the Goosegreen cottage.

The trials consequent on their separation, the necessary abandonment of their home by Cora and her father, and all their imagined sufferings long engrossed them—then came the fond, earnest solicitations from the ardent lover, that she should immediately surrender herself into his keeping, and cease to labor for her support. Impatiently, strenuously he urged it; then came inquiries for her present comfort, and, as if fond endearment could cure all ills, he caressingly soothed and comforted his restored idol.

But the parting good-night came, when Wilton had to seek the country inn, and Cora her little chamber, which seemed no longer comfortless, so full of joy, her heart was beating.

The meeting of the Colonel and Wilton the following morning was stiff and reserved, but the office of "The Goosegreen Rainbow" was near at hand, and the music lessons absorbed but little time, so that not a nook, dell, or wooded hollow was ever coursed by squirrel or patridge, that Wilton and Cora did not find in her father's absence. And strangely beautiful her fair face grew with the happiness that lent it light and joy! And if a father's self-denying feelings could be rewarded by a daughter's returning smiles and buoyant spirits, the Colonel met with full compensation for the sacrifice he had made. And when with her, he seemed repaid; but alone, he had his bitter hours; and he felt none the less enmity towards the father, if he had softened his prejudice against the son.

He met Wilton with punctilious ceremony, and Cora

marked her father's avoidance of her lover's eye, and the rising flush that kindled when the latter sometimes spoke.

The Colonel's love for his daughter had effected more than the power of man could have done, and at times he still recoiled from the step he had from sympathy and tenderness been induced to take. Wilton saw his position, and his pride was keenly wounded ; still, love for Cora was uppermost in his heart, and he smothered the rebellious feelings that rose at the thought of the ungracious recall. Consciousness of full equality sustained him in his suit, and it was with a feeling of grateful joy that at some future day he could restore the Livingston property to its proper lineage. He thanked God that at the recent trial, his father had been honorably acquitted of the fraud charged upon him, after a thorough legal investigation, and that no evidence of wrong existed on the part of his father in the maintenance of his defence. Therefore, with a clear front, and, as he believed, with a name of undimmed brightness, he sought the hand of the daughter of the proud, but poor, Edward Livingston. He had not forgotten the taunts of the latter, but he forgave them.

Wilton passed a week at Goosegreen, and a sensation he made throughout the village. Everybody knew the day after his arrival, that the handsome stranger had come to visit the beautiful Miss Livingston, and if any villager had lacked the information, it was not Mrs. Jonson's fault. He had a delicious visit with Cora, and left her with a heart light as her bounding step, while the playful tenderness of her winning smiles, threw again their old charm over her freshened beauty. Anticipation of again meeting her cheered the sad parting, and so many promises Cora made to her lover not to weary herself with teaching anybody but himself, that he went away full of hope that her days of toil would soon be over, and that a happier home awaited her, than she could find in the rosiest bower in Goosegreen.

The Colonel had bowed his adieu as stiffly as ever, but Wilton felt that he had come at his own bidding to see his daughter, and Cora had succeeded at last in getting her letter, every word of which she treasured, and what was still better, more of them were promised, and to come directly to herself. So happiness had found its way into the humblest cot, and where last of all, poor Cora had ever dreamed of enjoying it, at old Widow Smith's, in the valley of Goosegreen.

But while such a turn in affairs had taken place with Cora and her father, Mr. Clarendon was reproaching himself for not preventing so much misery as he had caused, and in fancy saw Cora dying of consumption, and the Colonel frozen into an icicle, in the depths of wretchedness and despair. He pitied Cora from his heart, angry as she had made him, and his present desire was to reinstate them at Villacora; but this he knew, could only be done by securing them independence. He therefore resolved to seek business for the Colonel, and to lease the premises of his old home to him, the debt to remain payable at the expiration of a term of years. This inducement, he felt confident, would win back the Colonel, and relieve Cora from the feeling of obligation.

Accordingly the week after Wilton left Goosegreen, the Colonel received a letter from Mr. Clarendon, proposing to him to lend him assistance in the settlement of some estates of persons lately deceased in the neighborhood of Villacora. He flattered the Colonel into the belief that he could thus make himself essentially and profitably useful, and thus return independently to his old home, which he informed him, was awaiting his arrival in its old state.

He expressed his regret that the Colonel had ever left the premises, which was against his wish or knowledge, and that he hoped Miss Cora would not become so attached to Goosegreen as to regret her return to her friends.

Colonel Livingston was elated with Mr. Clarendon's letter, and though "The Rainbow" was becoming daily more popular, he was easily led to abandon its editorship, and to proclaim that Goosegreen was not like the shores of the Hudson. Cora smiled through her tears at the prospect of going home, but not until she was thoroughly convinced that they could live independent of favor from Mr. Clarendon, would she consent to the change.

She and the good widow had become excellent friends, and the yellow-haired girl was "never so beat in her life" as at Cora's declared intention of leaving before the "quilting bee" was to come off. Mrs. Jonson, too, had been as far as the gate several times to invite Cora to take tea with her, but the Colonel was always in the door-way, and she said if there was "ever a man that she despised, it was Captin Livestone."

But Cora knew little about the feelings of the Goosegreeners, and with mingled emotions of joy and perplexity prepared to

return to Villacora. They had been absent ten months, and arrived there the last of the season, when vegetation was rich with summer verdure.

Mr. Clarendon had sent word to Sophy and Judy to have the house in preparation for them, and for the gardener to resume his place. He was anxious to restore the old state of things, and to obliterate, if possible, the remembrance of the injury that he had occasioned to the feelings of both Cora and her father. He remembered Cora's paleness and depression before she left, and scarcely looked for the resemblance of her former self. But a fortnight of happiness had worked a magical change in her youthful face, and when she returned to her old home it was radiant with bloom and beauty. Her soft blue eyes were glistening with tearful joy, and the rich red lips from which accents of gratitude fell, quivered a little as she met the welcome that awaited her.

Her father realized that Villacora was no longer his, but it was home after all, and in his heart he thanked Mr. Clarendon for the favor he had done him, in the inducement he had held out for his return. The business which he had also procured for him precisely suited him, and his sojourn at Goosegreen had had the effect of producing contentment with his present lot.

Mr. Clarendon knew nothing of Rufus Wilton's visit to Cora, and would as soon have believed in a change in the course of the planets as that the Colonel could have become reconciled to his daughter's engagement to him. But he knew little of the anguish Cora's quiet un murmuring suffering had occasioned her father, and how much trial of feeling it had cost him before he could sanction the addresses of her young lover. Still, his assent could scarcely be considered reconciliation, and with all Cora's happiness, she felt the coldness that was exhibited by her father towards Wilton. Mingled with this was the feeling, that there was probably another to reconcile, and she felt embarrassment approaching to dread at the idea of meeting the parent of her noble Rufus.

She had seen him often as he had passed the grounds, wrapped in his mysterious veil of gloom, that like a pall ever enshrouded him. There was something that savored of romance to her young imagination, in his dark, haggard face, and in the erect form that seemed as he walked, unsocial and alone, to forbid communion. Her eye had always lingered upon him,

and she had often wondered how any woman had ever dared to love him, and where that beautiful being was, that had left him in his youth, while yet his bride. And now that she was to become the wife of his only son and heir, she felt more than ever a dread of him, and great solicitude lest he should hate her, as her father had her lover.

And those sentiments were not long unrevealed, for through the servants it became known to Cora that fearful imprecations by Mr. Wilton had been poured upon the head of his son, for his visit to Goosegreen. She heard, also, that though pale and indignant, Rufus had made no reply, and she hourly looked for him at Villacora.

Mr. Clarendon had met them on their arrival home, and although he felt sympathy and some triumph at the thought of Cora's painful situation, and at the mortification her pride must have endured at Goosegreen, still he was more piqued and chagrined on her return, at the sight of her soft, blooming beauty. Though his eye feasted on the loveliness of her freshened charms, still, his pride was wounded, for poverty and trial had failed to subdue her, and its crushing weight had brought her no nearer to him. He had eagerly looked for her wan, dejected face, and anticipated much pleasure in restoring her, through the change that he should effect, to her old happiness and bloom.

Cora received him with a kind welcome, for she had forgiven the past; but in vain he looked for sorrow in the sweet smile that greeted him. In the tears that moistened her eyes, joy only glittered, and in the happiness that sat on her brow, cheek, and lip, he read the full serenity of a heart at peace.

She had no tale to tell of the horrors of a country village, or of the vulgar society with which she was compelled to mingle, but so much to say of the beautiful scenery, and the grassy loveliness of the place, that Mr. Clarendon half sarcastically said that it was almost a pity that she had returned.

"I have learned," said Cora, "that happiness does not depend upon locality. I could be happier at Goosegreen, conscious of being in the right path, than in a city, surrounded by all the luxuries of wealth."

"And has this been all that has made you so happy?"

"No. God has richly blessed my efforts in what I considered my duty. It is difficult, sometimes, to know what is right; but if we seek wisdom, I believe we shall be guided, and I shall never regret my country sojourn."

"But one would think it had proved an Elysium. Pray, what were its peculiar charms?" said Clarendon.

"It is not luxury that is satisfying," said Cora; "for when we suffer privation, we can better see our insignificance, in contrast with Him upon whom we all depend, and who can bring light out of darkness. The lowly are more inclined to look within and above, than those who rely upon the riches of the world. Moderate comforts, at least, make us appreciate greater."

"How did your father philosophize? I regret much that he had this trial, but I had not time to prevent it."

"My father is none the worse for the visit, but much happier. Do you not think that affliction softens the heart, and sometimes frees it from the shackles which have bound it in error? He has more *self-reliance* too, now, than before he went away."

"You prefer, then, that he should receive no assistance from others?"

"Mr. Clarendon, I am not ungrateful for such assistance as will lead my father to look to his *own* energies for deliverance from debt. You know the dream of his life, and it is certainly no kindness to aid that delusion. When you furnish him employment, you confer the only obligation for which I am grateful, and such remuneration as compensates for his services. More, it would be painful to me that he should receive."

The character and independence of feeling that Cora exhibited, seemed so little consistent with her delicate, childlike beauty, and youthful expression, that Mr. Clarendon listened wonderingly and half incredulously to observations that seemed to him so foreign to her nature and years. He saw that she was not one to be bribed, and that to win her favor, he must first secure her honest respect. He was half irritated with this exhibition of her character, for adoration of him was the essential quality he required in the woman of his choice. Thus was Mr. Clarendon led on by a love of victory rather than by passion, to conquer what he considered pride and obstinacy in Cora, and which, though they disappointed him, the more difficult she became to win, seemed still more to exalt the prize.

The Colonel had entered heart and soul into his plans, and with aroused energy of which he had not supposed himself capable, commenced the business, which promised fully to occupy his time, and afford him a maintenance.

Rufus Wilton soon heard of Cora's return, and the same

evening found him enjoying with her, the pleasures of a summer night on the lawn.

They were walking together when Mr. Clarendon caught a view of them, as he came from the Colonel's office, where he had been for some hours closeted. As he approached the house, Judy came up behind him and said,

"Miss Cory can't reach the plums half as well as *he* can—can she?"

Mr. Clarendon turned suddenly, when the speaker slid into the gooseberry-bush, and he was as much amazed as at any juggler's performance, to see her walking unharmed the next moment, a rod off, towards the poultry-yard.

The same glance revealed Cora and Wilton, as they stood in the orchard; he with his hand resting upon her shoulder, while she showed him, playfully, a large plum, which she refused to give him. Her hat was laid aside, while around her head, and over her shoulders, she had thrown a scarf of black lace, which lay like a fleecy cloud about her snowy neck.

Clarendon looked upon the pair admiringly, for an instant, while Cora's fairy beauty held him fascinated. The next, rage overpowered him, and turning on his heel, he entered the office he had left.

"Colonel Livingston," said he, with ill-disguised feeling, "does *that scene* meet with your approbation?"

The Colonel came forward and saw the tableau beneath the plum-trees. On the glowing beauty and happiness of his daughter's face was his gaze fixed.

"Which is best," said he, solemnly, "to see her thus, or to carry her to her grave?"

"I thought," said Mr. Clarendon, with suppressed feelings, "that you had too much pride thus to win back the estate of your parent. Has the son or the father consoled your disappointment?"

When Colonel Livingston had once shaken off the chains that had bound him, and by a re-release of his property had made himself free, his tongue also became loosened with his spirit.

"Neither," he replied, with frankness. "I asked my heart which it was best to cherish—hatred towards the innocent, or my child's happiness."

If ever Mr. Clarendon wished the whole party defunct, it was at that moment. Where was now his hope, when the

father had deserted his cause? and what was more aggravating, the change was all brought about by the salutary air of *Goosegreen*, and the poverty which carried them there.

"Is this the first time they have met, with your sanction?" said Mr. Clarendon.

"No," replied the Colonel, "they were a week together at —Goosegreen."

Thus had Mr. Clarendon defeated his own ends, and the sorrow and humbled pride that he had hoped would drive Cora to him for relief and succor, had worked in another's favor, and the darts which he would have affixed in the breasts of the suffering, recoiled upon himself.

CHAPTER XX.

Oh! rose of May!
 Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!
 O Heavens! is it possible, a young maid's wit
 Should be as mortal as an old man's life?

SHAKESPEARE.

THE following week Rufus Wilton went to New York, to remain a few days. As usual he sought his friend, Mrs. Linden. The affectionate interest which she had ever manifested in his happiness, was a balm which he had loved in earlier years, in the vexations of life; and now, that the greatest joy of his existence was secured, he craved her sympathy.

His father had cursed him in bitter language for his choice, but as the words came from his lips, like low, rolling thunder, he feared no evil from the accompanying flash.

He found his friend overjoyed to see him; and as she came forward to greet him, he scarcely observed that she had been suffering since he saw her, and that her eyes were red from weeping.

As he entered the apartment where he usually found her, a form glided from the room which arrested his attention.

Flora Islington had looked up as he came in, and thrown aside her book, while with a timid, half-startled expression she raised her eyes to his face, and the next moment passed out of

sight, but not until Wilton had observed her graceful form, and the loveliness of a countenance that reminded him more of a picture than of anything human. For a few moments he could not speak, so captivated was he in the glance which he had of Flora. He thought that he had seen her before, and soon remembered that on the night of his visit with Cora to see Mrs. Linden, that she had lain fainting before them as they left for home.

"Pray, who is that beautiful girl?" said Wilton to his friend, after he had recovered from his surprise.

"She is my adopted daughter," said Mrs. Linden. "She is a strange girl, and avoids society. There are few more calculated to adorn it, but she is morbidly sensitive, and shuns every one but me."

"She seems happy—her expression is lovely."

"Yes, at times she appears angelic. She reads too much for her mental health, and is so absorbed with the ideal, that I fear that she will never rationally enjoy the realities of life. She inclines to be a transcendentalist, likes German literature, and is often wild, seemingly, with her vagaries and dreams—but I trust that her mind will yet become balanced, and that she will act more and dream less.

"Has she any aim in life? this constitutes everything to the ambitious. Has she any one to live for but herself?"

"She ought to have, to be happy; I have aspired to this in my education of her, to lead her to forget herself, and to live for others."

"Self-love is so engrafted in human nature, that it is difficult to root it from its base, and its gratification, we cannot expect to be entirely neglected. But one with her physiognomy was never selfish—she is full of fervent feeling, and capable of powerful emotion. I can read that in her eye. Why does she so shun society?"

"That is her own secret, dear Rufus. I wish you could draw her from seclusion, and make her more cheerful. Perhaps a stranger could bring her mind to its natural tone."

"Was she ever gay?"

"The morning lark was not gayer than poor Flora."

"I will try to cheer her if she is sad—but she fled like a frightened bird; cannot you lure her back?"

"Perhaps so, if you seem to be reading."

Rufus Wilton resorted to a book, when Mrs. Linden called

Flora from the next room, and asked her some questions relative to her work. Flora saw from the door that Mrs. Linden was alone, and sat down by her side. As she did so, she inquired with the guilelessness of a child who he was, and added, "his eyes are like yours. I would like him for that."

"He would like you, if he knew you. Don't run away when he comes again; he won't speak to you if you don't wish him to."

"Oh! I don't see any one *now*," said Flora plaintively. "I go by myself, and strange, beautiful beings come and sit beside me. Yesterday a little child with dark eyes and golden curls, came and nestled in my arms. Some day it will prove true. Then I shall dream of the old library and Sappho, and of *him*. I cannot help it—is it wrong?—if so, why does God put him so much in my heart?"

"But, Flora, I wish you to know my friend. He will be very kind to you."

"Is he like you?" said Flora, starting.

"Come, Rufus," said Mrs. Linden, quietly, "let me introduce you."

Rufus Wilton threw down his book, and as he approached Flora, she bowed and smiled faintly, but the habit of fleeing was so habitual to her, that she rose instantly to go.

Wilton made an effort to draw her attention to his book, and before he had read her one paragraph she quietly listened. Mrs. Linden seemed delighted at the sudden fancy of Flora to her young friend, and asked her to sing to him. She instantly complied, and in a bird song swelled her voice to its full extent and sweetness. Wilton was charmed with her singular grace and beauty, and wondered what it was that made her seem so peculiarly constituted.

That she had been educated, and had the exercise of her mind and tastes was apparent, still there was an unsettled wandering in her eye that disturbed him when he looked at her. She became, while he sat by her, confiding, and even laid her soft hand on his, while she said—

"Your hair is like *hers*, too. Did you ever have a sister?"

"No, Flora, never. Will you be one to me?"

For an instant she looked earnestly upon Wilton. Then, while her eyes expanded, she said almost inaudibly:

"He said so to me. Yes, my guardian bade me come and be his sister. I cannot be a sister to any one but him. Has he another sister?"

Wilton was now satisfied that Flora was affected by some monomania that unsettled her brain, which was the cause of her strange, peculiar wildness, and sudden exclamations upon irrelevant topics.

"Who is your guardian, Flora?" said Wilton.

"Don't speak of him," whispered Mrs. Linden.

"Oh, he is coming for me, but I cannot go to him. Why not?—he loves Flora. Who else should love her?"

Both the little white hands were now placed on Wilton's arm, while the young girl talked incoherently, as Mrs. Linden had never heard her before. The latter became suddenly alarmed, and growing almost frantic, screamed, "Oh, my God! she has lost her reason!"

Flora did not seem to regard her friend, but while her eyes suddenly roved from object to object, she muttered low words conveying no meaning.

"Oh, may God forgive me, if this is added to my sins. I have caused this wreck. Yes, *I* have crazed thee, my poor Flora; but I acted in kindness; it was to save thee from *him*."

"From *whom*? Oh, tell me Mrs. Linden," exclaimed Wilton.

"No, no! my poor Flora!" Mrs. Linden, for the first time was roused to a sense of Flora's wandering intellect. She had been insensible, hitherto, to her strange mood, and now was unwilling to believe that she was seriously deranged.

She called her to come near to her. Flora obeyed, and laid her head on her lap, and sung low snatches of songs. Then, while she clasped both her hands upon her forehead, she screamed, "I see him! I see him! hide me! hide me!"

"*Who* is coming, my poor darling?" Flora made no reply, but continued to rave and mutter low unintelligible words. Mrs. Linden sobbed in anguish, while she exclaimed, "*I* have done it—I have done it; but for me, she might have been bright, happy, and beautiful."

"Yes," murmured Flora, "you killed me—poor Flora! Tell him to come and cure her—she is sick, and they have carried her away. Poor Flora, let her go *home*."

"Why do you reproach yourself, my dear friend. You have done well, I am confident, whatever the case may be," said Wilton.

"Oh, shall I send for *him* now? Can *he* cure her? What shall we do?" asked Mrs. Linden, anxiously.

"Who?"

"Her old guardian, Mr. Clarendon."

"Is this poor girl the ward that he adopted?"

"She is, and I stole her from him, and I have deprived her of reason. Oh, God, forgive me if I erred in this! Is it not enough, all that I have in store for *thee*, poor Rufus!"

"Are *you*, too, deranged?" said Wilton. "My friend, be calm. Let us lay Flora down, she is now sleeping."

The poor girl seemed in a dreamy slumber. Mrs. Linden applied restoratives to her head, and by cooling applications, trusted to soothe her brain. Her sleep became heavy and deep, and Wilton was encouraged that when she should awake, her delirium would have passed off. But not so Mrs. Linden; her groans were heart-rending to hear, and mingled with reproaches for the misery she had brought upon Flora. She uttered such mysterious lamentations for the sufferings that she was doomed to bring on another still dearer, that, with imploring earnestness, Wilton begged her to confide in him all her trouble, and to allow him to assist her.

"Confide in *you*?" said she, turning pale. *You*, for whom, for four-and-twenty years I have borne the anguish of a guilty conscience. Yes, but for you I should have rested in my grave, while my secret had been long ere this revealed. Ah, poor Flora! sad has been thy lot. But what is the loss of reason, to the brand of guilt, and the burden of a heavy conscience."

"You make me very, very sad, my friend," said Rufus Wilton, while he looked upon the workings of the noble features of the woman who spoke, such as he had never before witnessed in her. "If you have stolen the ward from a guardian's care, some good motive has prompted you to the act, and to God you may leave the consequences. As to the rest, I am still in darkness. I will not leave you until Flora has awakened. I came to tell you of *my* happiness, and instead, I have been saddened by hearing of your misery."

"Are you happy?" said Mrs. Linden, wringing her hands; "and have I wept and struggled with my heart for naught? Is it of no avail, that I have prayed for strength to reveal my tale, and that with humiliation, in the dust and ashes of a penitent spirit, I have resolved to do it, and that your happiness is enough to palsy, even now, my tongue?"

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Linden, I know not how sorrowful

your tale may be, but whatever burden you may bear, I will gladly share it with you, and relieve you if I can. But you must hear from my own lips first, of all the bliss in store for me. My heart beats with thrilling emotion while I speak, for Cora Livingston is *mine*. By her father's consent, she has plighted to me her hand, and greater joy on earth I cannot ask of heaven."

"And has Edward Livingston, with all his pride, given to you, Rufus, his daughter?"

"What has pride to do with this precious gift, my friend? Except in years, am I not his equal? and, more than this, can I not, by this alliance, restore to his child, at my father's death, her grandfather's estate? Would that it had, by his will, become her inheritance, instead of falling into the hands of him who now holds it."

"Would that it had! then *I* had been less guilty," said Mrs. Linden.

"Are you, too, bereft of reason? Where are your words of congratulation? Why do you not say, as I expected, 'God bless you both, dear Rufus?' You talk to me of guilt, instead—of sorrow at my happiness."

"And do you love her fondly, Rufus—so that it would be hard to give her up?"

"Love her, my friend? You may ask me first, to part with life. And why should I do it? Is she not *mine*, by the love of her pure heart, by the betrothal of her hand, and by the consent of the father who idolizes her?"

"And you could never disgrace her name—cause her to blush for the name of Wilton?"

"Your language is mysterious. I enter upon the world with a fair fame—life is before me, for I am young in years, and if aught could preserve my name unsullied, love for her could do it. I know no reason why I am to be basely feared of doing future wrong. Cora is poor, and I thank God for that. If she were rich, I might shrink from asking her to wed me."

"And how have you subsisted for years—since your birth, dear Rufus?"

"On my father's honest means, until recently, when he gave me a portion of his estate."

"What induced him to do it?" said Mrs. Linden.

"I know not—it was strange in him. I had often urged

him to make me independent, for I knew that he was able so to do, but he one day received a letter, that he tore in fragments before my face. In that hour, he conveyed to me the property, which has since made me free from demands upon him."

Mrs. Linden's face grew ashy white, while Rufus Wilton spoke, then, struggling to be calm, she said :

"And you are happy? tell me that again—ring it in my ears, until I hear it drowning all other sounds—numbing all other senses, but the one that tells me of your bliss. Rufus, let me not have suffered in vain; let me not have carried for four-and-twenty years this heavy burden, and all for naught. If you are happy, go, Rufus, and let me suffer on."

"Why do you so insanely talk? Why must my happiness be bought at the expense of your suffering?" said Wilton.

Mrs. Linden seemed regardless of the question addressed her, and continued, "But I did not mean to kill poor Flora. Must all for whom I live, feel the deadly blight of *guilt*? I would have had *her* innocent—for this, I saved her, and thus she has lost her reason—bright, beautiful, gifted Flora! Why, *why* did not thy lover wed thee, and save me this deadly blow? Is it a punishment for my *sins* to *others*? Accursed has been my fate, and doubly *thine* whose treachery and guilt has made me privy to thy secret."

With these words, Mrs. Linden sunk exhausted by the couch of the pale Flora, whose slumber continued peaceful, while Wilton listened in amazement and grief, to the ravings of his weeping friend.

In vain he begged her to explain to him the sorrow that seemed to crush her to the earth. What had her life of suffering to do with his happiness? he asked. Her incoherent talk seemed to him wilder than the softer wanderings of Flora, and yet intelligence too clearly beamed in her eye, and spoke in each pale feature, to doubt the absence of her reason.

Through the long watches of the night, Mrs. Linden and Rufus Wilton sat by the side of Flora, who continued calm and peaceful, and awoke at dawn, rational and pleasant. Her delirium had been brief, but Wilton feared that at night it might return, and advised immediate medical assistance. Mrs. Linden's wretchedness seemed somewhat relieved with Flora's return of reason, and as she was about to part with Wilton, she told him to try to forget her wild words, that her life was

one tale of sorrow, and if she could only see and know him happy, that her work on earth was done. But Wilton again returned, he could not leave her thus, and said :

"But is this justice, my dear friend? Is it right that you should suffer for others, without sympathy, without consolation? This you say you do—I know not how."

"Do *you* talk to me of justice, Rufus? Shall I be just at last? Will it avail me? Will it take away my load? Could *you* bear it, Rufus? poverty—ruin—*shame!* Would you ally yourself to the daughter of Edward Livingston, and still be *happy?* Or shall I tell you the *secret of my life*, that will bring upon you poverty, and the shame of a father's *guilt?*"

"Will you, my best friend, asperse my father's character? On the name of Wilton bring disgrace?" said the young man, with indignation, breathing in every feature. "What proof have you on which to found so vile a slander? Is it not enough that the law has substantiated his right to possessions held for five-and-twenty years? Shall friend as well as foe, lacerate a child's pride, and filial feelings, with insinuations worse than statements, which can be refuted?"

"Have you cause," said Mrs. Linden, with a whitened lip, "to love your father, to revere him as a parent?"

"What my father has been to me is irrelevant to this matter; he is my parent, his name is my own, and his honor is as dear to me, as his disgrace would be fatal to my peace."

Mrs. Linden covered her eyes and wept. "Forgive me, dear Rufus, for wounding you," she said; "your welfare is inexpressibly dear to me. I cannot tell you now how or why. It is enough that your mother's friends are yours. Go and be happy in the love of your dear Cora; God forbid that I should part you."

"Part me from Cora! What object, or what power could you have to do this? You are indeed an enigma to me, and though I could not love my mother, were she living, with an affection more holy and sincere, still I cannot allow unfounded rumors to undermine my faith in my father's honesty."

"Let the matter then so rest; may you be happy, and though wrong may be done you, wrong done for you, in your own consciousness of right, be blest."

"But, my dear Mrs. Linden, I wish not to be blinded on any point. It would afford me happiness to explain any erroneous opinions that you may form, and if any mysteries, relating to

my past history, are in your knowledge, anything relating to my mother's destiny, I can only say, be frank with me, if you are my friend. He, or she, who would keep me in the darkness as to any matter of deep interest, manifests no friendship for me."

"Oh, Rufus, must I lay bare to you a dark, a sad tale, which might afflict you for life! Is it not better that you remain ignorant of facts, which, if unknown, you cannot mourn. Or would you prefer to have exposed to you, the history of a life that will make you recoil, as a man of honor, from your present position—which will cause you to hate your parentage, your name, and to abandon the soil on which you tread; still more, dear Rufus, which will cast a stain upon her who gave you birth?"

Rufus Wilton staggered against the wall. His face was deadly pale. For some moments he could not speak. His eyes closed, and his white lips were compressed together—but it was not long ere the struggle passed.

Coming towards his friend with a firm step, and unflinching courage, he said, "Tell me the worst that you have to relate; let it be for good or for evil, I would know the truth, so far as I am concerned in the relation."

"Dear Rufus, it has nearly cost me my life, to reveal to you what will cause you anguish to learn. Mistaken kindness has kept a painful secret from you, that you might enjoy a father's ill-gotten wealth."

"But my mother! what do you know of *her*?"

"Ask your father, Rufus. Fear him not. You have a right to know her history. Ask him if he heard no rustling in the twilight more than twenty years ago. Ask him if he turns, looks, and ponders yet. Ask him if in the watches of the night, he still listens for that step that turned his visage pale, and if that faint shadow, like Banquo's ghost, sits still beside him, when he counts his gold."

"My dear friend, what grim terrors would you awaken, to shake my faith in my parent's honor? Let me still believe that some insane delusion separated my mother from her infant boy. Let me trust that bitter sorrow for her loss keeps him silent as the grave, and that fear of inflicting pain, deters him from imparting to me her history."

"Oh, Rufus, why were you born to suffer with those who more deserve it? But perhaps it were better now than later."

"It is too late now to offer me an alternative. Your words will ever haunt my brain. I will come again and hear all that your knowledge enables you to truthfully reveal; but mark me—it must be the naked truth—and may God enable me to hear it, and to bear it, whatever it may be."

Mrs. Linden and Rufus Wilton parted, after a conversation of painful interest. Wilton returned to his lodgings with sad forebodings, which thoughts of Cora could scarcely dissipate from his mind. Mrs. Linden was to-night to him a strange, mysterious woman; yet she seemed magically woven with his destiny, and from her lips he longed to hear the story of his parent's early life. He little dreamed of its effect upon his own and Cora's fate."

CHAPTER XXI.

Go, speak not to me; even now begone.

SHAKESPEARE.

SINCE Rufus Wilton's last interview with Mrs. Linden, his mind had been much harrowed, with regard to the subject of her conversation, and more than ever perplexed with the rumors respecting his mother's history. Every year that passed over his head, increased his displeasure with his father, for keeping him in ignorance regarding her life, and flight from her home. He now determined to bring him to an open relation, or to abandon him as unworthy of his respect. The dinner hour was over at "The Park," Uncle Peter had left the house for a visit at Captain Sapp's, and the father and son sat together, each occupied with their own thoughts. The habitual reserve and taciturnity of Mr. Wilton, the elder, rendered him difficult of access at any time, and to break through the ice of his impenetrability, on a subject upon which he had been silent for the space of five-and-twenty years, required some courage on the part of his son. Bred with a feeling of awe for his stern parent, he had never, from childhood, enjoyed an hour of familiar intercourse with him. Still his purse had been ever amply supplied; he was denied no privilege, no luxury, which he craved; and he had liberally received at college and

abroad, such sums as furnished him every advantage for pleasure and improvement. He had sometimes thought the promptness with which his drafts were answered, was inconsistent with the cold severity of his father's manner, and his accused parsimony with others, but while he received the required amounts, he questioned not the willingness of the bestowal. But the agitation of manner which his father evinced, upon one occasion, after the perusal of a letter, which he then burned, and his securing to him a large estate, upon attaining his majority, harassed and puzzled the son, who would have so fervently welcomed one gracious word, with the liberal gift. His father's conduct and bearing had ever been mysterious to him, but, biased by Mrs. Linden, he was impelled from a sense of injustice and wrong, to demand an explanation of the great enigma of his life. Rufus Wilton's spirit and determination breathed in each lineament, as he resolved to probe the matter to its depth.

He held a newspaper, but its contents were a blank page. His thoughts were in the past. He nerved himself to the effort, and addressing his father, who was writing at a table near him, he said: "I have long wished to confer with you on a subject, sir, which has been one of years' contemplation."

"What do you want?" interposed his father, sternly—"more money, young man?"

"Not a cent, sir, I only wish that you were as liberal with your confidence, as with your purse."

"What confidence do you want, boy? I made no bargain for that," he muttered. "If you are not satisfied, let me know your requirements."

"What you can furnish me very easily," said Rufus. "I wish to know my mother's history."

Mr. Wilton started from his chair, as if he had been stung, but listened, while his eyes stared upon the wall.

"And further," continued the son, "I wish to know the history of my infancy, and my early childhood, where, and under whose care I was nurtured?"

"You are like the rest of Adam's race, born of woman, and full of trouble," replied the father, sneeringly.

"Is this *all* the answer you have for me, sir?"

"Go to those who know," replied his father, huskily. "Why do you inquire?—you no more need a mother than I a wife."

"I trust, sir," said Rufus, "that you see that my inquiries are not unnatural, or impertinent. Why should I hear conflicting rumors—intelligence from every source, but the one that can afford me satisfaction?"

"Perhaps I can do no more; but I can, at least be silent," replied the elder Wilton.

"This is worse than unkind in you; it is even cruel, to deny me my request."

"Boy," thundered the father, hoarsely, "shall I reveal a history that you would wish untold?"

"Let me know upon whom that history reflects dishonor," said Rufus, coldly. "I wish to hear, why my mother in her early wedded life, so soon became an alien from her home—for surely if she could forsake her husband and child, it was not without cause, deep and painful."

The face of Roger Wilton betrayed the workings of a mind deeply agitated. The unexpected queries of his son, exasperated and alarmed him. He had believed that the silence of years had for ever sealed a tale of shame and sorrow; that his beautiful young wife only lived in his memory, and that of *one other*, who might better know her history. How should he now deceive *her* child? was the query of his mind.

"Would you know the worst?" said he, "ask Edward Livingston, or for ever keep silent regarding one whose errors I would bury in forgetfulness. Mark me further," continued the dark-browed father, "you have opened a subject I thought for ever silenced; and now, if you again revive it—hear me—or by—I will cast you off as I would shake a viper from my bosom. I wish to forget that you was ever the son of Rosa Neville. If you wish to talk of her, go to *him*, who perhaps, still has her in his"—

"Your insinuations are false! and I will prove them such. What proofs have you, on which to found them?"

"Why need you any, boy? If I had the proofs, I would not furnish them. Did I give rise to this conversation? Have I proclaimed her false? No. Go ask Edward Livingston why you cannot wed his daughter; ask *him*, not me, where she is, and where she went from the cradle of her boy. No, ask not her deserted husband."

"Forgive me," said the son, touched with the tone in which his father spoke, "your words have deeply pained me—and much more your lack of candor. You speak of Colonel

Livingston ; is there no deeper cause of enmity than your words reveal ? No secret that even shadows image forth ?”

“*Shadows !*” said Roger Wilton, in a sepulchral tone, while he staggered against the table, “what do you know of *shadows* ?

“Gladly would I believe suspicion all a shadow. Thus far I have deemed your claim to your estate as just as it is strong. Confirm me, I beg of you, in this belief. Swear, oh, swear, that you hold it by no fraud.”

“Begone, son of a hated mother, begone from my presence, until on your knees you crave pardon for your vile suspicion. Is this my reward for all the sums expended on you since your birth ? What could *she* have asked for more.”

“Then she loved me, and wished my welfare. Oh, tell me this,” said the son, eagerly.

“For what else did she care, but for”——

“Cease ! forbear to slander my pure, my angel mother.”

“Then hold—depart—ere I wreak my vengeance on you.”

The father and son were equally excited, both erect, and not unlike in appearance ; the deep furrows on the brow of the former, marking the most striking difference. In the twilight the disparity in their years was less perceptible. They had come to a fearful crisis, and a scene arose in the enraged husband’s mind, that long years had never buried. Dark on his imagination came the events of one dreadful night. Like an incubus it had sat upon his breast for five-and-twenty years, and its weight grew only heavier, while the hand of time bore him down, *down*, as guilt can only crush its victim.

In the day-time, in the night-time, in the sunlight, and in the fitful gleams of the twilight hour, he ever heard a rustling, ever saw a shadow on the wall. It seemed to haunt him, foretelling his doom. And often, as he closed the shutters of his lordly mansion, as he laid down to sleep on his lonely pillow, a beautiful but senseless being lay beside him, white and cold, there dragged by the hand that *struck her* !

Under a heavy cloud, the father and son parted, while the latter resolved soon to again seek Mrs. Linden, and to hear her tale of secrecy.

CHAPTER XXII.

Melancholy

Sits on me as a cloud along the sky,
And will not let the sunbeams through.

BYRON.

THE night was clear and beautiful. The lambent light of the stars fell upon the earth, throwing a soft gleam over Cora's fair cheek, as she sat with Wilton upon the balcony that opened from the parlor of her house, while she said,

"We have had a lovely walk, Rufus, and my heart was never so entirely at rest. Don't you think that we are often happiest when silent?"

"Yes, Cora," said Rufus; "complete joy is serene, calm in its fullness. When you are with me, as now, watching the quiet stars, you seem to me a part of heaven, and as I look on both, it does not seem wrong to mingle my hopes of a glorious future with thee. And ah! I sometimes fear that, happy as we are, we shall be separated on earth."

"Once, you were always hopeful, Rufus. Something has occurred since you went last to New York." Cora raised her blue eyes inquiringly to the darker ones that seemed fixed in an earnest gaze on her face, and tried to read in them all that saddened and depressed her lover. "Are you ever sorry," said she, "that all is at peace between us? Do you ever wish that we had never met?"

"Oh! Cora, that would be a sad hour, indeed. Should it ever come, may we be able to bear it, darling?"

"You affect me, sadly, Rufus," said Cora; "there is nothing now to cloud our happiness, and these days and long evenings, when you are with me, are too blissful perhaps, to last; but if we live, God will permit us to enjoy many tranquil ones, if not as sweet as those he gives us in our youth, at least we shall enjoy or suffer our lot together."

"And you can never doubt me, never spurn me, Cora, even though I seemed not worthy of you?"

"My noble Rufus!" said Cora, while she laid her hand confidently in his, "God can only now separate us. Spurn you! How you grieve me! I wish that I could chase away your fears. I shall think that you are growing weary of me," she continued, playfully.

Rufus replied by holding close the little hand in his, and said, "It is true that I am sad to-night, but my sadness has no touch of romance. There is an influence that depresses me more powerfully to-night, than nature."

"What can that be?" said Cora.

"Do not ask me, Cora. Let us sit here. Let it be the sweetest period of our lives, and I will forget there is a coming future. I will have no fears, nor dim your dear eyes more. Why should I, Cora? God has given you to me."

For a while both were silent as the voice of nature, when Wilton aroused from his sad reverie, and proposed a walk through the garden, though the hour was late. A gentle breeze came over the dewy lawn, and in the distance, through the trees, the waters of the Hudson glittered in the starlight. There was something in the inexpressible clearness and softness of the atmosphere, that tranquilized the senses, and beguiled Wilton of his sad forebodings. His soul seemed to grow lighter in the open air, and with Cora he wandered, long and happily. A charmed and spell-bound silence enchained their hearts.

Cora longed to hear, as well as feel, that the gloom of Wilton had passed away, and when he spoke she almost held her breath to listen, as he again cheerfully conversed.

Night came on, and as the moon arose, it shed its rays over the beds of flowers, and through the trees that shadowed them, leaving the walk half in leafy shade, and the whole tinged with a mysterious, soft haze.

Cora felt the influence produced by the solemnity and grandeur of the midnight hour; for rarely, if ever, had she yielded to Wilton's wish to linger with her, until all but the bat and the owl had slumbered. An ineffable sense of the soul's sublimity, of its affinity to its great Creator, overwhelmed her, as she stood alone with him beneath the starry canopy of night. Something appealed to her feelings, and dimly, but powerfully, she felt the consciousness that though but an atom in the great heart of creation, her soul had its origin in God.

Suddenly the voice of Wilton ceased, for he seemed again overpowered by the charm of the hour. The eyes of Cora were often fixed in thought, on the broad blue heavens, while both seemed reluctant to return.

"Do you never wish," said the young girl, in a low voice, "that you could soar from earth, glide on the moonbeams into the broad, starry heavens, on the wings of some ethereal gossamer thing, that was not of this world, escape from the prison-bars of mortality, where the spirit would be free, and seek, in divine communion, to unravel the great mystery of our creation and existence?"

"My dear one," said Wilton, "at this hour, we have thoughts that seem to shun the glare of sunlight. Oh! yes, and is it strange that this spark of divinity lighted in every soul, should struggle to expand itself, and in a purer atmosphere of being, increase in effulgence until the material is lost in that sublimer essence, that seems born of the great Eternal? But for love, the cement that binds human hearts, and which is the universal principle that unites us with the source of our being, life would be rapid, chained as we are to a finite existence. Yes, dear Cora, it is a natural aspiration on the soul's wing to seek its own boundless realm, and with the spirit's eye, to peer into skies of life and light, the home of the Immortal. But how limited is our vision! While we are lost in the sense of the beautiful, while we taste the essence of the sublime, while we seem to approach the infinite, and enter the vestibule of that inner life, whose portal gate is mystery, even then we shrink back, clay-laden, overpowered with the chains of mortality—making our dreams but a part of the celestial—a foretaste of the life that is to come."

As Wilton spoke on, warm hopes took possession of him, and in that moment he believed, that Cora would be at last united to him for life, and, he hoped, for eternity. Like a golden cloud her redundant hair fell over his arm, and as he parted the soft waves on her forehead, he vowed that she should never be sacrificed—that, if in honor and pride he could wed her, Cora should be his, but that he would die a martyr to his love, before she should dishonor her name, by linking it to disgrace, or share with him a life of sorrow and bitterness. But Cora's dreams wore the hues of the prism in the sunlight. To-night she was supremely happy. She had almost forgotten the hour, and that they must soon part.

The following day he was to go to New York, and Cora asked him if he should see Mrs. Linden.

"Yes," replied Wilton, "did I tell you that I saw that dark-eyed, beautiful girl again, who lay fainting at the time of our visit there?"

"No, Rufus; tell me all about her. Who is she?"

"I know only that she is a midnight star, but I fear the light of her mind is dimmed for ever."

"What! deranged?"

"Yes, Cora, and who do you think has wrecked her reason?"

"I know not. Pray tell me?"

"Mr. Clarendon."

"Oh! Rufus, how—does she love him?—and he shun her?"

"Yes, Cora, I hear that she has loved him to insanity, and that but for his ambition he would have married her."

The blood suffused Cora's cheek, and while she clasped her hands gratefully, exclaimed, "Oh! thank God, through me she has never suffered. Poor girl, if he loves her, may she not yet be happy?"

"While he woos Cora Livingston, do you think that he could think of a poor foreign girl?"

"Is she without education or talent?"

"No; she is gifted and possesses the charm of a cultivated mind. But Mrs. Linden tells me that she has lived alone for him, and that she is not fitted for his sphere—and what is worse for her—he is of the same opinion."

"Oh! Rufus, I am glad that you have told me this. Mr. Clarendon has faults, but beneath his worldly policy, there is heart yet left. Does he know of her derangement?"

"No—this will test his love for her."

"Would you marry me if I lost my reason, Rufus?"

"Ah! Cora. No one else should try to restore it, had I my will, and for fear Queen Luna should exercise her power, we will now go in."

Quietly and slowly they entered the moonlit parlor, and for the first time, Cora was afraid that her father would hear her entrance—but all was still, though she fancied that at a window she saw the black eyes of Judy in her night-gown. But suddenly they disappeared, and the parting interview was not disturbed.

Cora went to her chamber in the moonlight, and her tears dried, while she thought that in three days' time she and Rufus Wilton would meet again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Is there no tyranny but that
Of blood and chains?

BYRON.

WE must now carry the reader back into Time's dark vista, for the period of a quarter of a century, and retrace a scene which will throw some light upon the history of some connected with our pages.

In the same old mansion where Edward Livingston first saw the light, where his father died, and where Rufus Wilton was left motherless in his cradle, sits at this distant period a man under thirty years of age. His arms are folded across his chest, and his eyes fixed seemingly on the landscape seen from the window, from which he now looks forth. He seems in moody thought. His dark hair curled about a forehead high and intellectual in its mould, beneath which a pair of black eyes twinkled with a cunning, sinister expression. His mouth better revealed the character of his present meditation, which was wreathed with a sardonic smile, while occasionally his lip curled with triumph, mingled with contempt. Decision and energy was betrayed in his features and bearing, while his thoughts ran thus: "Crafty and hypocritical I may be deemed, but what code is superior to the law that is founded on self-interest? Of what use is that petty ambition that makes a man a slave to his fellow creatures? What satisfaction equals that of duping the trusting fool, who has not wit enough to see the hidden devil. I was, it is true, born a pauper—dependent, and a slave to a patron's will, and but for the spirit that made me spurn his condescending favors, I had still been a cringing parasite. But for my work, Edward Livingston would have spurned the earth he trod. Bah! where is now his Livingston pride? let it feast upon his princely blood, while Roger Wilton holds his purse. Who but I can loosen its silken strings? Did he

not from childhood make me feel the trampling of his cursed foot, the overbearing insolence that cunning could only match, and is he not now repaid for all his proud assumption?

"Where did he also find his pretty bride, the haughty beauty whose Neville blood he considered but fit to mingle with a Livingston's? she, the daughter of a proud Virginian! where did he find his beautiful betrothed on his return? a cast-away. In the arms of him he hated. But stealing his precious jewel is the smallest of my spoils. He thought, at last, to overcome the cunning of his foe. But here he failed. The only witness living, is scorching his liver beneath the sun of India. It is true that his Rosa never loved me, but I taught her to doubt the constancy of her lover, and wounded pride and desperation made her mine; *mine*, as a cold, unbreathing statue calls me husband. Yet she cannot leave me, for I will keep her, rebel though she is." Roger Wilton carefully looked around him. It was dusk; the cricket on the hearth sung its never-ceasing tune, and without, the hum of insects filled the air, while the distant sound of a night-bird's whistle came shrill on his ear. All else was still. The shadows of the tall trees fell darkly over the room, and danced on the carpet in the dim light proceeding from a grate where a fire burnt dimly, for the evening breeze was chill, and the blaze had been lit for comfort.

In that flickering, gloomy light, he slowly paced the room, and while he looked carefully around him, drew from his pocket a roll of parchment, and as he looked at it, thought, "No spot is safe for *this*. I cannot sleep while guarding it; it was made to impoverish and disgrace me. It shall smoke the chimneys of the halls I love so well." Roger Wilton stepped forward, and laid it upon the grate. He started, thought he heard a noise, and for a moment listened; there was a rustle, seemingly of silk, then all was still. It was now darker, the fire burned slowly; a shadow fell across the wall. Darkness and guilt made a coward of him who an hour since would have dared the committal of any deed. Hastily he fled; the fire burned with scarce a gleam, still there the paper lay. In the outer hall he stood to listen—courage returned, and he retraced his steps. He looked upon the grate, the paper was not there, but a smoke as if from ashes, filled the room. "It burned like chaff," he muttered; "I smell it yet. It was quickly done. The rustle was but the wind, the shadow, but my fears."

So Roger Wilton consoled his momentary apprehensions, and

left the darkened room, the cheerless grate, and the twilight phantoms. He turned his steps towards the apartment of his wife. "She sent for me an hour since. I will see her, vixen though she be," growled the stern husband as he proceeded in search of his wife. Opening the door of a room across the hall, he stepped onward towards another opposite, not having perceived, when his terror drove him from the grate, the form that had slid beneath the heavy folds of tapestry, nor the fair hand that snatched from the embers *the last will and testament of Robert Livingston*, while an inflammable paper of lighter material was left to burn instead.

Carefully concealing the scorched document, signed by a dying father's hand, the young and trembling wife hastily escaped through the glass door behind the curtain, which, opening onto the colonnade, afforded her speedy access to her room. Mrs. Wilton, as we now behold her, was a woman of superior attractions, tall in stature, with a form of full and voluptuous proportions. Her complexion was rich, with large dark eyes, and a profusion of chestnut hair, while her smile was radiant and sweet. Still the fire in her eye and her lofty carriage forbade any trespass upon her dignity or her rights. She was queenly and elegant, though often considered haughty by those who knew nothing of the native nobleness of her character. Her countenance now evinced much suffering. She first hid the rescued will, and sat down in her room, pale and excited. When hearing her husband's step, she composed herself to receive him. Rosa Wilton was yet but nineteen years of age, though from her size and dignity she seemed much older.

Mr. Wilton entered her apartment, and after lighting a cigar, seated himself, and said,

"It is not often that I am thus honored by such a summons. Why am I sent for now?"

"It is indeed strange," said Rosa Wilton, coldly, "that a wife should wish to greet her husband, but it is a matter of no ordinary moment that compels me to ask the civility. If I am young in years, I am old in feeling, and never in my childhood lacked the spirit to defend myself, and thus, and for that purpose, I have sent for you."

"You pause; go on, madam," said Mr. Wilton.

"I have resolved, Roger Wilton, though the bond of marriage unites us, to leave you for ever." Rosa Wilton again

stopped ; emotion overpowered her ; and though not a tear dropped, her form trembled.

"Why is this determination?" said Mr. Wilton, while he brushed off the ashes of his cigar.

"Why need you ask?" said the young wife, with her form erect, and her dark eye flashing. "Have I not borne enough?—indignity and insult heaped upon insult, until my heart has nearly burst with outraged feeling?—not *broken*, Roger Wilton—that you could never do. Had a month elapsed after our marriage, before your tyrannical course commenced? Have I not been denied society at home and abroad? Have I not often been confined, even by bolts, from leaving these *grounds*, lest I should make known your treatment? Worse, have you not even *struck me* in your anger—deny it not—do I not carry on my arm the proof of your violence because I resisted your oppression?"

"Why do you stop?—go on, madam," said the husband, coolly.

"Yes, you shall hear all, though you so calmly deride me. When the hour came that was to give you a son and heir, where was then the husband and father? Mark my words, a day of retribution will come. Another and a burning charge I have against you. To-day I have found the letters which Edward Livingston wrote me while in Europe, and which you kept from me. Now I know *why* you lured from me my faithful servant, who would have delivered them to me. Ah! fool that I was to believe him wedded to another! Where, tell me, are mine to him?—and where is the villain that you hired to deliver them to you? Gone, I suppose, with the witness to his father's will. Well you may turn pale, and eye me like a tiger. *I know your secret*. Guard it better than you have the happiness of your wife. For our child's sake it is safe. Regard his welfare and I will not betray you. Be faithful to him and enjoy your ill-gotten estate. I will no longer share it with you, but I cannot bring poverty upon his young head. Spies will watch your course, and while you are kind and faithful to my child, I will not expose your fraud."

"What proof have you, silly vixen—girl?" replied the husband, "on which to exercise your threats? What cause have you to talk of fraud and wills?"

"Will not sleep sometimes betray the guilty? But you need not fear while you guard with fidelity the welfare of our

child. No, though twenty wills were stolen, I would keep a father's disgrace from weighing down his early years, while I could screen him from such humiliation."

"Where have you seen a *stolen will*?" said the dismayed husband, while he grasped the arm of his wife.

"Where I found my letters. Locks are not always safeguards to villainy."

Roger Wilton breathed freely. "She knows not of its destruction," he thought.

He looked at his proud, unloving wife, and for the first time feared a mortal. "Could not her tongue," he asked himself, "be silenced? Can she be trusted," he murmured in spirit, "when by exposure of my wrong she enriches the man she loves, though disgrace, and ruin levels a husband she hates more fully?" Roger Wilton knew not the gushing tenderness of a mother's heart, nor that when Rosa Wilton resolved to leave her husband's roof and desert her infant child, that for her boy's sake she could leave his father's villainy undisclosed.

For a brief space neither wife nor husband spoke. Roger Wilton reflected on his position. He knew the spirit and resolution of the haughty girl that he had married, while her heart had madly loved another. He knew that treachery and falsehood had made her his, and that since the discovery of his plot she more than ever despised the husband that had lured her from her betrothed. He feared to trust her within the influence, or even in approximation to her former lover. He had vowed in his heart that Edward Livingston and his wife should never meet. He felt that his own safety, as well as her security, depended upon their separation, and her threats of leaving him he regarded as idle as the whims of a froward child.

"So you have found your letter, have you," questioned the husband. "Are not their love-sick pages consoling?—or would you brave the laws of wedlock, and cement the old bond between you?"

A carnation hue passed over the cheek of Rosa Wilton, while she replied :

"Your sneers and scoffs will not be long expended. No power on earth could make me longer prolong a life with you."

"Supposing I am unwilling to part with so amiable a pattern of her sex?"

"You can have no object in detaining me. You will not, I suppose, deny me, on our separation, a portion of the wealth I brought you?" said Mrs. Wilton.

"You would not, surely, deprive me of the charms that won my devoted heart?" answered Mr. Wilton.

With eyes burning with contempt Rosa Wilton rose from her chair, as she replied :

"Beware," said she, "of further insult. All I ask of you, is my liberty, and my child. At least, give him to me until his infancy has passed."

"You are premature," said the husband, "in your plans. Your boy is in his cradle. I neither intend to part with wife or child. Calm yourself—I have had reasons for restricting your liberty. What society do you need, beyond that of the husband of *your choice*?"

A sneer passed over the face of Mr. Wilton, as these words were uttered. Mrs. Wilton did not reply, but hid her face in her hands, while her husband continued :

"You may think of abandoning me, but you cannot—at least, to-night."

As Mr. Wilton spoke, he rose and left the apartment, and, as he did so, turned the key of the door, and put it in his pocket. The blood of the proud woman boiled with insulted feeling. She covered her eyes and wept passionately ; then, approaching the cradle of her boy, knelt by his side, and there vowed to win him from his heartless parent, and to teach him to despise the name he bore. After the absence of an hour, Mr. Wilton returned to his wife. She was weeping, with her infant in her arms. Seemingly disregarding him, she frantically caressed her child.

"Can I give you up?" she murmured in a choking voice.

"Rosa," said the husband, "that sacrifice will not be necessary, for you shall never leave me."

"You have annulled the ties between us," replied Mrs. Wilton. "You cannot prevent me from seeking another home than yours ; and if God permits, I shall yet again see my child. Yes, my boy shall learn to love the mother, who will never sink a victim to a husband's tyranny."

"A victim, Rosa!—we are but even. Your motives in marrying me, certainly could not demand too much from *love*!"

"Ask not my motives for the act. Oh ! where was my

reason, when I believed your tales of falsehood? Desperation, naught else, won my consent."

"Well, then, desperation shall retain you."

Mrs. Wilton laid her sleeping child upon its pillow, and walked the room with rapid strides; then, approaching her husband, said, with softened feeling:

"There is one tie yet unites us—this darling child. For his sake, oh, what would I not suffer! But it would be ten thousand deaths to linger with you; and yet, for him, I might suffer on."

"Have you more to say, Rosa? Your words can no more harm me—they have even ceased to wound," replied the husband, whose tones derided more than their purport. "Say on."

"What have I more to say? There have been days when kindness would have soothed me—days since we were wedded—when my vows would have risen up in judgment; but it is now too late for me to retract. I shall leave with you our boy, knowing that I have a pledge for his security from harm. I shall have him also watched, and while I have assurance that you are faithful to him, I will be as secret as the grave."

"No more of this!" said the enraged husband. "I defy you to approach the threshold of these outer doors. Will you provoke me to anger—to violence?"

"Violence would only make me more rebellious. I never saw the man whose subject I would be, much less a cringing slave."

"Your volcanic bursts increase, I think of late, but by—— if you will not listen to reason, I will terrify you into submission."

As Mr. Wilton spoke, he opened a door that led down a pair of winding-stairs to an unfrequented part of the building. This space or court was under ground, and had been formerly used as a wine-cellar, and for the period of thirty years had been left to the rats, and such refuse articles as had been consigned to the tomb of forgotten things. The door that led to it was never opened, and Rosa Wilton started when, for the first time, she saw it swing upon its hinges. Her husband stood for the moment at the entrance of the doorway, then dragging his wife forcibly with him, pointed downwards.

"Do you see that cellar below," he muttered fiercely

"You profess to know my secret doings. If you breathe a syllable of your suspicions, I will keep you *there*, for ever, from my sight, and also from your child's. I can easily proclaim your absence. Remember that you are in my power, instead of I in yours. Tell me, was it *you* that caused that *rustling*, the *shadow on the wall*?"

"I shall not answer your questions. You may confine my body, my mind you cannot chain," said Rosa Wilton, between rage and fear. "This is no country for dark deeds like *this*. But what may I not expect of you. Oh! my God, that this breast should learn to *hate*."

"Rosa," said the pale husband, "there are conditions from which you are safe from violence, or confinement. Bury in your heart your vile suspicions, and be contented with the lot that you have chosen. Can I trust you in a conference with Edward Livingston? Would you not lead him to suspect wrong of even your own wedded husband? How can I either, be sure that even your marriage vows would keep you from a revival of your love? I know that the spirit of a devil led you to marry me, but it is not easy to annul those vows."

"I will hear no more," said Rosa Wilton, standing back erect.

"Promise me, Rosa," said Mr. Wilton, "never to reveal your suspicions, or I will not permit you henceforth to see your child."

"I will part from you, and yet will see him."

Rosa Wilton struggled with desperation to return to her own room, but on the dark stairway her husband held her fast, while he exclaimed in low but stern tones,

"Promise me, or I will dash you down the staircase."

"Villain," cried the frantic wife, "you may kill me first"——

While she spoke, a blow from her husband sent her reeling against the stairway. She did not fall, but was stunned, and fainted. Roger Wilton became alarmed, and feared that he had killed his wife. Hastily carrying her through the hall, into her chamber, he laid her upon her bed. It was now the hour of twelve. The servants were asleep, and fearing no intrusion, he applied restoratives, and staunched the wound which she had received. Finally, opening her eyes, Mrs. Wilton groaned, and called for her boy.

The husband's joy at his wife's recovery overcame his rage.

"Rosa," said he, "You exasperated me to this violence. Promise all the silence I require, and you shall have a kind, devoted husband. Let me learn to trust you. I must not fear a woman."

"No, no ; I might not keep a promise made for *such a bribe*. But to this, I will agree. While you screen my boy from harm, while he has tender, devoted care, I will never say that on the burning coals you were seen to lay a will. No, though you defrauded me of a noble husband, and bound me to a tyrant ; thus, I will be bribed to silence, in my absence from you."

"Rosa, I will never permit you to go."

The beautiful but suffering woman lay still upon her bed. Her head was bound with linen, while around it lay its rich brown folded hair. Passion still worked in every feature.

Her head was thrown back, exposing her full chest, now heaving with agitation. The softness of girlhood had departed from her lineaments ; but the eloquent woman, struggling with feeling, there breathed. The wife was silent, but her eye, brow, and lip, spoke the determination of her spirit.

Mr. Wilton sat by her side, watching her for an hour, then, being sure that he had inflicted no mortal injury, he laid himself upon a lounge, near her, to sleep. The key of the door was in his pocket. He felt to see if it was safe, and then turned on the side upon which it rested. At early dawn he rose and left the room, where he had passed the night, and sought the servants, telling them that their mistress was ill, and he feared, delirious. He further said, that she had wandered in the night, and injured herself. He enjoined perfect quiet, and informed them, that he would nurse her alone.

After removing the child, the husband then resumed his post. Mr. Wilton's directions were imperative, and no one in his service dared question him, or his motives, but silent murmurs went through the house, respecting the strange orders received within. During this illness, no one was admitted to the presence of his wife, excepting Susy Burke, who, in her old age, went by the name of "Goody." To her, even, the injured woman was represented as deranged, and and strict silence urged as a means of her recovery.

For a week, Mr. Wilton thus watched his wife, while he daily coaxed and threatened her to become reconciled, and to live submissive to his requirements, which were, seclusion in

his home, without communion with others, excepting such society as he might seek for her enjoyment, while she vowed eternal secrecy to his doings. This she refused, but feigned such apathy, and indifference to her existence, that the fears of her husband partially subsided.

His plan was to sell his property and take her to Europe, where he need not fear her tongue. Rosa Wilton was young and beautiful, and but for her acknowledged hatred to her husband, she would have exercised over him a sway that no woman ever had. A gentle, passive being had no fascination for Roger Wilton; but there was that in the character of her he married, much that inspired and aroused his deep but malignant nature. In his milder moods, her companionship pleased him, and at times she exercised over his mind and senses a magical influence. He did not wish to part with her, for many reasons, though his attachment could hardly bear the appellation of love. Her present gloomy state of mind suited his tale of her derangement. He kept her secluded from all visitors, assigning her state of health as a sufficient cause for her retirement. His attention to a hitherto neglected wife, was noticed, and many believed that a change had come over the heart of the stern, cold husband.

Susy Burke became, meanwhile, her confidant, and with cunning and fidelity she played her part.

Feigning submission to Mr. Wilton, whom she had learned to hate, she thus more effectually served her mistress. In the presence of her husband Mrs. Wilton preserved silence to her nurse, and he believed it habitual, and that she had actually sunk into a state of mental insensibility, and he sometimes thought that she had become imbecile in consequence of his violence.

And it was true that she had never recovered from it, but its physical effects had been dissipated—still like fire it burned within, never to be effaced, and she now believed never to be forgiven. She daily reeled under the influence of that blow, and she never saw him but her spirit rose in rebellious wrath, and her veins thrilled with feelings akin to hatred.

But in her husband's presence Rosa Wilton evinced no emotion. She would hold her child for hours, looking at it with intense love, apparently having for no other living object thought or care. She daily pondered on the course best to be pursued with the rescued will. Her next thought was for the

child she had resolved to abandon. She had secretly met her old lover, and promised as her atonement for her faithlessness to him, to for ever quit the husband that she had learned to hate. His disclosed villainy had since then confirmed her in her determination.

Thrilling and painful had been the only meeting of Rosa Wilton and Edward Livingston. It was a dark but starry night, when beneath the ruins of an old building they had stood, and with feelings of remorse and anguish on one side, and bitterness and contempt on the other, revealed their feelings.

"If I vow to go, to leave my home, my child, and him I loathe," said Rosa Wilton, "will you then believe me innocent of wrong in heart towards you? Edward," she continued, "I have dearly paid for my credulity, but I offer you atonement."

"Atonement, Rosa, you cannot offer me," said Edward Livingston, now in the pride and beauty of early manhood. "No, you are *his*, not *mine*, but go from him, and I forgive you; leave him *for ever*, and I will forget, not hate you."

"And leave my child! Oh, Edward!" The young wife of Roger Wilton fell humbled at the feet of him she still adored.

In pride and triumph Edward Livingston raised, and looked upon the girl he had once vowed to wed, and found another's bride; and he turned from her while he said:

"Do you ask me to bid you cherish *his* child? No, Rosa, though you love it, with a mother's love, for *me*, from whom you have torn my life, make even the sacrifice I ask. Can I crave deeper revenge?"

"Did I not hate *him*, Edward, I could not do even this for you, so precious is my boy; but since I have learned his treachery, and that he lied to win me from you, I despise him. And now have you no kind word for Rosa, Edward, before we for ever part?"

"How can I," said the once fond lover, "trust my tongue to utter words I scorn to breathe to the wife of another? Ah, Rosa, it were too easy to believe you guiltless, and to love you still; but while my veins thrill, and my pulse quickens with your presence, I feel that thou art *his*. But Rosa," Edward Livingston now approached the woman whom he had just spurned with bitterness, "go, leave your home, and I will forgive you all. Take this purse, Rosa, you will need it—it is not much to thank me for."

"Edward," said the weeping wife of Roger Wilton, "I will, —and know that she who wanders forth in this wide world without home or shelter, who will pine in sorrow for her child, will look upon you as the instigator, as the one who aided her in her flight. Better to take this than to live on—— but no matter, I bid you now *farewell*!"

"I accept the atonement you offer me, Rosa, for all the wrong you've done me, and we part no longer foes. Give me your hand; and now by the sacred vows that once made it almost mine, I bid you go—then I am not wholly unavenged."

The soft fair fingers were released with a pressure to his lips, and the groan of anguish that issued from the lovers, told of the agony of that long adieu. Thus Rosa Wilton and Edward Livingston parted, in their youth. Long years had passed before they met again.

Weeks had flown since that secret, stolen interview; and during this interval Rosa Wilton had discovered the double, criminal treachery of her husband, which strengthened her in her determination to leave him. For sometime she had watched her opportunity to escape his vigilance; and while secretly eyeing his movements she observed the caution with which he contemplated the destruction of the paper which he held, and was urged by curiosity to detect his aim, and, if possible, to save the document which he would destroy, if artifice could do it. The heavy folds of drapery proved a covert for her person, and while her husband fearfully fled from fear of the rustling she produced, she saved the will whose loss her old lover had mourned. The sad, young mother now knew that she had the ability to rule her husband in her absence; and, for her child's sake, she resolved to keep it, that she might secure her little deserted one both luxury and kindness. Thus, in after years, when Rufus Wilton reached the age of one-and-twenty he came in possession of an estate which made him independent of his father.

Gradually Mrs. Wilton seemed to recover her spirits. She even kindly received her husband, and manifested no wish to leave the premises of her home, while each moment she spent in planning her escape. At last her husband became less solicitous respecting her movements, and as she seemed contented, and finally appeared happy and submissive to his wishes, he was careless in his vigilance of her security. His wife observed, with satisfaction, the change produced by her

ruse, and resolved to seek the first opportunity afforded her to leave for ever the roof of her detested, and she believed criminal husband.

A beautiful summer day had passed while she pursued her avocations, and devoted herself with tearful tenderness to her child. Her husband had returned from New York, fatigued, and expressed the intention of retiring early to bed. He asked her for a glass of brandy and water, which she prepared, adding to the potation a few grains of morphine. He drank it, and an hour afterwards slept quietly. With confidence in the drug, and in the deep sleep of her husband, with a stealthy step she sought for the key, which he usually took from the lock when he retired. She feared that she should awaken him, as she knew that it lay beneath his pillow, and that his slumber was often restless and wakeful; but with gentle caution she slipped her fingers beneath the head of the sleeper, and drew the key from its hiding-place.

Rosa Wilton then approached the cradle of her boy; he was sleeping in cherub beauty. With an agonized look, she clipped from his brow one soft curl, and slid noiselessly towards the door. As she did so, she caught a view of herself in the glass; she saw that her face was deadly pale, and by the light of the night-lamp, it seemed shadowy and spirit-like. With superstitious and real terror, she placed the key in the door-lock. The noise started her husband from his sleep—he rose in his bed and muttered “Rosa,” but sank down heavily. Through the opened door, she fled first to Susy’s room, telling her, while on her knees she sank, never to forsake her boy. Susy promised fidelity, and bade her quickly flee. Then over the lawn the wife and mother fled, and before the morning had dawned, she was alone in the heart of a crowded city. She soon arrayed herself in the deepest weeds, and with the ample purse furnished her by Edward Livingston, she was enabled to find a quiet home.

At the hour of ten, the forsaken husband awoke. With lifted hands, Susy Burke stood by his bed-side, crying in terror, that on rising, she had found her mistress’s door unlocked, and on entering the room, that she had gone, and the child was crying in its cot.

“Gone!” thundered Mr. Wilton, “My God! where? pursue her before it is too late.”

With precipitation, Mr. Wilton procured horses, and flew

towards the landing ; he found that the boat in which his wife had probably fled, had left several hours previous, and in despair he turned towards his home. He was, he found, at last baffled and deserted by a wife who shared with him a secret, that if revealed, would lead him into the depths of ruin. "But thank Heaven," he muttered, "while her boy lives, I am safe."

Roger Wilton felt keenly the loss of his wife, though his pride was most deeply wounded, and rage overcame him, when the suspicion crossed his mind that through Edward Livingston's influence, she had been, perhaps, induced to abandon him. Yet he had no proof on which to found his jealousy, and he dared not, as he was situated, investigate the matter. We have now, but a word more of Rosa Wilton ; but once she succeeded in seeing her infant boy ; her visit was suspected, and efforts were made to entrap her, but in vain. Roger Wilton had lost his young wife, and she who had fled from mingled feelings of hatred, scorn, and love for another, was scarcely less miserable than her guilty husband.

Through long succeeding years she mourned for the child she had deserted, while self-reproach added poignancy to her grief ; her conscience told her that she had deeply erred, and that from wounded pride, and violent impulse, she had plunged herself in misery, and left motherless her only child. Rosa Wilton felt that her punishment was partly merited, and that while she scorned to share the stolen property of another, she deeply sinned while concealing the wrong. But what other atonement had she to offer her child ? By her sin she bought for him tenderness and wealth ; for if the first came not from parental care, she knew that the rich were never denied the smiles, for which the poor might sigh in vain.

Such was the sophistry and consolation of the wandering Rosa, while the scenes of her early life, and the great step which left her afloat upon an uncertain tide, wretched in heart and prospects, powerfully affected the destiny of others.

Thus, my reader, have we travelled with you into the past, far back from the period of our tale, while the fate of Rosa Wilton remains yet untold. From the hour she rested in her youthful beauty beside the tyrannical being from whom she fled, listening in her once elegant home to the breathings of her infant boy, he has not seen, or heard of her wanderings or destiny. He is now a man of four and fifty years—grey hairs are profusely mingled with his still curling locks, and many

furrows are engraven on his cheek and brow. The deserted child from whose fleecy locks the frantic mother stole one baby curl, is now a man. At the period of our tale, he stands in the same room where she left him sleeping that beautiful summer night. Twenty-four years had fled, and in view of the same old trees, the same blue waters, the same lofty ceiling beneath which his young mother whispered to him her fond adieu, he stood in the vigor of manhood to learn from the husband and father the history of her youth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A wretched soul, bruised with adversity,
We bid be quiet, when we hear it cry;
But were we burdened with like weight of pain,
As much or more we should ourselves complain.

SHAKESPEARE.

RUFUS Wilton proceeded the following morning to New York, and at evening sought the home of Mrs. Linden. She was paler than when he last saw her, but seemed calm and collected, and more than usually affectionate. Rufus' first inquiry was for Flora. Mrs. Linden became agitated at the query, and said that she had not been entirely rational since he saw her, but that she was peaceful and harmless. Her mind seem to dwell upon her marriage, which she thought was near at hand.

Her wedding-dress she talked much of, and spent the most of her time in making and wreathing garlands. Mrs. Linden wept as she spoke, and reproached herself for the loss of Flora's reason. While she was talking to Wilton, Flora came into the room with her eyes fixed upon a beautiful wreath of white flowers, which she put upon her head, and as she approached a mirror, she whispered, "He is waiting!—hark!" Then turning her head, she saw Rufus looking sadly at her.

"Have you come," said she. "Do I look like a bride? Louis likes white, so it's no matter if it is a ghostly color." As Flora continued in her incoherent way her wild talk, Wilton, for the

first time, attentively observed her, and was struck with the soft, gentle grace that characterized her movements.

"Tell me something of her history," said he to Mrs. Linden, as Flora left the room.

"I know little of it, Rufus," said the lady. "The first time I saw her was at the death-bed of her mother. I was a neighbor of Mrs. Islington, as she was called; and hearing that she was very low, perhaps near her end, I went into her sick room, and witnessed a scene which I can never forget. There also stood Mr. Clarendon in his youth; why he came there then, I did not know, but I heard him promise that young, dying mother to protect her child. Never shall I forget the solemnity of his words as she pointed to her darling, then a child of ten years of age, and said, 'Who will take care of her?' 'I will,' said the young man. How I then revered him! and more, when in reply to her faintly uttered expression of gratitude as she gave her to him, he replied, '*I will keep the trust!*'"

"What did he do with her," said Wilton, eagerly.

"He made an idol of her; he petted her in childhood; and after educating her, took her to his home, and worshiped her as a goddess."

"But not as the woman he would marry?"

"No, Rufus. I had never forgotten the little orphan girl, and on hearing Mr. Clarendon's wish for a governess for his ward, I sought the place, to be near his lovely charge. Each day she grew more fascinating, more beguiling in her youthful charms, and each hour he became more enslaved with his favorite. I believe he loved her, as he never has, or will another woman."

"And yet he scorned her as his wife?"

"Yes; this I knew; for I was in possession of the tale attached to her birth. In her illness, the sad secret of the mother had been revealed to my ears, and I, as well as Clarendon, believed that Flora was illegitimate, and that by a false marriage was her poor mother betrayed, and then deserted. This secret, which Flora heard accidentally whispered some months since by one of the old neighbors of her mother, in addition to her yearning for her guardian, has, I fear, destroyed her reason."

"But how came she here with you?"

"Oh! Rufus, I lured her away from her beautiful home—her adoring lover—and have endeavored to teach her that wisdom which I only learned in later years—the wisdom that is

not of this world. I sought to shelter the lamb that I stole from the fold of him who had placed it in an earthly paradise, that it might enter spotless the bosom of the Great Shepherd and be one of Christ's flock. With the heavy load of sin that I myself bore, I was yet an instrument in the hands of the Lord to do good, and poor Flora became a true and humble Christian under my teachings and care. Tenderly I have guarded her, and but for an accident she would never have known the story of her birth. But I do not consider her incurable. With the return of perfect health, I believe that her reason would dawn, and her clear, bright intellect again bless her friends. But, oh I Rufus, I have not the means to bestow for this end, and unless he from whom I took her will provide her an asylum, I know not what will become of her, for, henceforth, I am again a wanderer."

"Where are you going? Oh! if you are to desert us for a long period, first open your heart to me, and tell me all the mystery that has clouded our intercourse. I *must* know it before I marry Cora Livingston."

"This is well, Rufus, and I have long sinned in keeping it from you, for the heavier now will come the great trial of your life. Yet it has been for you that I have committed this great wrong, and for you now I suffer."

Mrs. Linden's head now fell on her hands, and low sobs came from her breast. Rufus Wilton was much puzzled with her agitation. He took her hand, and begged her to explain it, saying that surely, after their last conversation, he had a right to expect it.

As Wilton spoke, Mrs. Linden pressed her high, pale forehead with a movement of anguish; while she, whom our readers have long since recognized as Rosa Wilton, murmured:

"Oh! my God! thou hast granted my prayer; thou hast blessed me with the love of my only child, my little deserted one, and he loves me as his mother." After a long pause, during which she grew momentarily paler, Mrs. Linden, as we must still call her, rose and opened a desk containing her private papers. She passed rapidly over letters of recent date, and not until her hand fell upon a package bearing the hue and stamp of time, did she discontinue her search.

She examined it externally, and then, from a small partition, drew forth a scorched document. A part of the paper seemed burned, and the envelope was half consumed. She had pre-

served it thus for long years. But Rosa Wilton felt that she could not longer live with this weight of sin on her conscience, such as her unrevealed secret occasioned her. It became a burden, causing daily anguish and nightly terror, and the character of her son led her to believe that, bitter as would be the trial, he would rather know the fraud by which he was enriched, than to live as she had done from childhood, on the property belonging to another.

She saw him about to marry the daughter of one whom his father had defrauded, and whose wealth he was about to lavish upon his bride—every dollar of which, she knew belonged to her parent. Yet Rosa Wilton also knew that she could not die as she had lived, conniving at the guilt of another. The conflict, which for years had harrowed her soul, had now reached a crisis. She had spent hours by herself in the struggle to do justice to Edward Livingston, which at the same time would disgrace and impoverish the son of her youth, by the revelation of his father's crime. By its concealment, she had endeavored, in her mistaken kindness, to atone to her son for her desertion of him when an infant, and to Edward Livingston she had paid the penalty of her faithlessness, by a life of suffering and lonely sorrow. In these struggles with her heart and conscience, had Rosa Wilton thought of the hour of retribution awaiting her guilty husband? No—it was swallowed up in the affliction that must come upon the head of her only child; for in the hour that she restored to him the mother who had been the dream of his boyhood, and the mysterious vision of his manhood, she must crush his heart with anguish.

With the burned paper in her hand, the pale mother again sat down by her son.

"Can you, Rufus," said she, with a voice trembling with emotion, "bear poverty, pain, and more, sustain yourself beneath a father's disgraced and perjured name?"

"I have come here to-day," said the son, calmly, "to endure all that you may inflict, and afterwards to judge."

"Oh! Rufus, can you think that I would willingly bring sorrow upon your head?"

The tone of gushing affection in this ejaculation from the low voice of the speaker, the fervor and eloquence in the pale face of the mother who spoke, awoke an inborn sympathy in the son. He impulsively caught the hand that trembled on his

knee, and raised it reverently to his lips, while he said : "I believe that you are sincere and good, and I bid you go on and tell me all that you have to relate."

"Know then," said she, "that since you were an infant, I have hid from the world, and from Edward Livingston, the will that entitles him to the estate, so long held by your father."

Every vestige of color fled from the face of the listener, but he said :

"How came you by it?"

"I rescued it from the embers, to which your father consigned it?"

"And he is a villain!" said the son in a low, husky tone, "and I, his son, have shared his stolen estate—subsisted on the wealth of Edward Livingston, while he and his child have suffered from poverty! Oh! my God, why hast thou permitted this! And *you*, madam, why have you preserved this dreadful secret? Why have you thus disgraced the innocent son with the guilty parent?"

As Rufus Wilton spoke, his eyes glowed with burning indignation, and his frame trembled with the power of his emotion.

"Do not—oh, do not reproach me!" said the suffering woman. "Here is the will, by its destruction you can avoid this disgrace; you can still live on, with the fraud unexposed."

"Mrs. Linden," said the son, with increased feeling; "will you insult me by the supposition that I could live a day, ah, an hour without a revelation of this villainy? Do you think that for wealth, for even a father's honor, I could make myself a scoundrel?"

"And I for long years have done this guilty thing!"

"For what purpose? and for *whom*?"

"Oh, ask me not—I am unworthy of the *child* for whom I have suffered."

With one long gaze of anguish and affection, Rufus Wilton clasped the hands of the woe-stricken mother, then, as he fell upon his knees, exclaimed, in a low, trembling voice :

"Do I behold *my mother*?"

"Oh, Rufus! will you own me in *this* hour?"

"Forgive me—oh, forgive me, my blessed mother!" said the son in a choking voice. "You have erred, but it is not for me to say it. You have at *last* done well, and saved your son from a life of dishonor. But, oh! why have you so long been a stranger to your home and your child?"

The son was now beside his weeping parent. He held still the hands that grew cold and pallid in his own, while she answered :

"That *home* was one of tyranny, and even for my darling child I could not brook oppression. From your father I had suffered treachery, and when I learned that to this he had added villainy, I fled."

"Why, then, did you not take me with you?" said the son, with a lip white as his mother's.

"To save you poverty ; to save you an honored name."

"And for me you have suffered even the pangs of a guilty conscience ; oh ! my mother, mistaken has been thy love ! Thou hast sinned against thy God, and bitter must be thy repentance ! Why did you not compel me to a life of labor ? oh ! better it had been than this hour of shame !"

Rufus Wilton's head was bowed in humble sorrow, while he still clasped tenderly the hand of her whom he reproached.

"What shall we now do?" said the suffering parent.

"Ah ! yes ; that is the question—What shall we now do ? This then is *the will*?" Rufus glanced at it, and with a ghastly face observed the burned edges of the document ; then rising from his seat, into which he had sunk, he walked the room, while he held it firmly. "We cannot," said he, "deliver this up to-night, but to-morrow it must rest in the hands of its owner."

"And where," said the mother, "will Roger Wilton then rest?"

"Stop !" said the son with excitement. "He must first be bid to flee. But *I* cannot do this. You must do it. You, who rescued the will from him, must proclaim to him his doom."

"I submit ; on me, rests this duty," said the mother, in a firmer voice. "When shall this be ? Not until into the guardian's hands I return his ward ; wait for this ; for the same hour, I must too escape. Let me not face, under these circumstances, my poor, defrauded Edward."

A bright flush came across the cheek of the son, as the mother thoughtlessly revealed her enduring affection for Colonel Livingston. "What does this solicitude mean?" said Rufus, "Why cannot you meet the legal heir?"

"There is that in the past, my dear son, that makes it painful. I know not that we even should recognize each other—for four and twenty years we have not met."

A smile of gratitude and love came over the features of the son, to pass away in a look of deep dejection.

"I ask not now, the history of your early years, dearest mother," said Wilton, "another time is best fitted for that relation—the business of the present absorbs all else ; I cannot leave you to-night, for our plans must be arranged between this and morning. First you must dispose of poor Flora, and then, with me, you must seek my father."

As Rufus Wilton ceased, for the first time he shed tears. With his head buried in his hands, he wept in bitter anguish. His mother came beside him, and like a statue of cold despair, looked on his misery.

"Have you not fortitude for this, my son ?" she asked.

"I know not ; I am but human, and when I resign this will, I give up what is dearer than aught else, save the honor of my name."

"What, my boy ?"

"All that makes life dear,—my Cora, my life, my pride,—she who was to me my guiding star, my hope, my all."

"Why must this sacrifice be made ? Will she not cling to you in sorrow ?"

"In shame !" replied Rufus Wilton in a tone of deepest woe, "this I cannot ask of Cora Livingston ; ah, well do I remember her father's taunting words in alluding to the name of Wilton ; but I deemed it then, as free from stain as his ; I thought I offered a spotless one to Cora."

"And yours is untarnished still, my son."

"Do you deem that I could claim the hand of her, whom I, though innocently, had aided in defrauding ?—on whose property I had lived from childhood—and as the son of one who fled from justice, convicted of a crime so base, hold her pledged to fulfill her vow ?—No, Cora, I resign thee !"

"But will she give you up ?"

"My poor, loving Cora, I will not give her the question to decide ; is she not a Livingston ? and do you think that I could ask her to ally herself to ignominy ?"

"Is she not a woman, Rufus, and think you that she will scorn you for restoring to her father his own, at so terrible a sacrifice."

"I see myself but in one light ; a defrauder of her rights, and the debtor of her father. What have I to offer her ?—not even an honorable name ; while she is rich and proud in her

exalted station, from which poverty never humbled her ; can I, a miserable beggar, live on her father's bounty, share the wealth, as but a pensioner of the proud man, who, but for his daughter's love, had spurned me like a dog ?—No I will cut off this hand before I link it to his child's, even though we both die martyrs to this resolution."

"Oh, my son, you know not the sacrifice you make—the sorrow that such a resolution would cause her."

"My poor Cora," said the suffering Wilton, "how sweet was our last meeting ; how filled my heart was with sad forebodings ! Yes, she may cling to me through poverty and through shame, but I love her too well to cloud her destiny with mine. Ah, think of a world's scorn ! Can I ever face their sneers—their condemnation of my father's crime ! Why, oh, my mother, did you not take me with you, even though I died in poverty !"

"I could not—oh, I could not. You were *his* as well as mine."

Through a night of anguish, Rufus Wilton and his mother talked of the duty of the coming day, and when the morning dawned, they parted as if in anticipation of a scaffold. Their faces were haggard, and their eyes red and swollen with tears. With a firm grasp, Wilton took the long-hidden will and proceeded towards his lodgings.

In all his suffering, he had but one consolation. He had found his long lost mother, and she was one whom, for years, he had loved. He sought his private room, where he sunk in such despair as the heart seldom in this life feels. Yet it was not that of guilt, for his conscience proclaimed him innocent, and for the crime of another, he bewailed in the depths of his grief.

In the meanwhile, Mrs. Linden, who had for ever dropped the name of Wilton, sought the room of Flora. And, oh ! such a change as she there met. The beauty and radiance of hope kindled in the eye, and on the lovely cheek of the insane girl. And so sweet and tranquil was the wandering of her mind, that but the glance of affection could have detected the loss of her reason. She was arrayed, that sad morning, *as a bride*. A white dress floated in airy grace about her person, and a long veil fell from her head of jet black hair, while across her brow lay a string of pearls. Strange as it may seem, she had dressed herself with taste, and with her tiny

foot, was stepping forth from her chamber, to meet her bridegroom. When Mrs. Linden met her, she smiled with such bewitching sweetness, that she kissed her, and addressed her twice, before she could realize that poor Flora was not herself. Then, coaxing her to wait until the hour for the ceremony, she lured the poor girl back to her room, and after calling her maid to her assistance, left her hastily, and proceeded to the home of Mr. Clarendon. She knew not what would be her reception, but she felt that this was her only alternative, to apply in the extremity to the old guardian of Flora. What could she now bring him back? not, alas! his bewitching ward, for only the beautiful tenement was left. She had wandered into that land of dreams, to which some are borne on wings of love, to taste, seemingly, of bliss, while others are dragged down by chains of misery, to hopeless sorrow. Flora's derangement was of the most harmless, but not less melancholy kind. Mrs. Linden felt that she had a painful task, to communicate the sad tidings of her lunacy to Mr. Clarendon; for she believed, that if ever he loved a being on earth, he had given his heart to Flora Islington. And that his life was embittered by the yearning he ever felt for the guileless love that had, for a period, so sweetened his existence. She had not falsely prophesied in this; for in the depths of a worldly heart, deeply but surely buried poor Flora lay enshrined, and however the courtier might seem to love, whatever worship he might pay to the fashionable and gay, in the lonely hours of Louis Clarendon, his sweet loving Flora, with her dark, spiritual eyes, was before him; and in his waking and sleeping dreams, he clasped her to his heart as his own. Since the acknowledged engagement of Cora, he had been more in society; but was becoming disgusted with the frivolity and heartlessness which he so frequently encountered. His hopes of obtaining Cora Livingston for a wife, seemed now frail, since her father had sanctioned the addresses of her lover, and he resigned her as a cold, ungrateful girl. In contrast to the icy Cora, and the gay coquettes with whom he had amused his leisure hours, Flora came back on his memory, in her youthful beauty, her heart burning with passionate love for him. Oh! how he wished her parentage was pure and spotless!—that before the world she had shone a star, and that she could adorn his home, as well as command his love, as his bride. But no, he felt Flora could only live for him—that she would

shrink from his guests, and, like a timid bird, fly from the gayest circles, only to find her home in his arms. Still he loved her, and at times bitterly repented that he had educated her alone for himself ; for though he could not deceive himself, yet might he not others, in the story of her birth.

As he left the abode of Madame Delano one evening, wearied with her jealous caprices, he came home, and seated himself on the old sofa, now always associated with Flora. He sought the little envelope, containing her hair, and taking the curl from its folds, kissed it, as a part of his lost idol, and resolved that she should yet be his ; and though against all his preconceived opinions, he argued himself into the belief, that, after all, his notions of a woman of the world being the most suited to his position in life, that his happiness was not as well secured, as by the devotion of one who lived only for himself. Such was the late sophistry of Mr. Clarendon, and the more he thought of Flora, the more he loved his lost darling. He contrasted her with Cora, and though the purity and beauty of the latter was a sweet vision to his mind, her remembrance brought no thrill of passionate emotion to his soul. She was not his warm, loving Flora. Through the night, he pondered on his dream of making her his wife. With this aim, he felt that he could win her, and restore her to her own former self.

When morning came, he thought of Flora, as she had sat at his breakfast table, in her girlish beauty ; and how she had, to the sacrifice of all etiquette, amused and enchanted him ; and he resolved, as he drank his last bachelor cup, that if he met the derision of the fashionable world, he would offer his heart and hand to Flora Islington. He had smoked his last cigar, and dreamed such a dream as only a bachelor ever pictured, under the ambrosial fumes of the magnetic weed, and scouted at the world, and their opinions, as of not a farthing's value, compared with his own, and those of his darling, Flora.

At this happy moment, Benson, the housekeeper, announced to Mr. Clarendon that a lady wished to speak with him in the parlor. The intelligence startled him, especially as Benson looked mysteriously wise.

He rose from his bamboo lounging chair, and sought his visitor with some curiosity and annoyance, for she had disturbed a delicious reverie. But when he met Mrs. Linden, who came

forward to greet him, he started back in amazement, with inexpressible emotions ; for he knew that she had come with some intelligence of Flora. He had ever hated her since she lured away his *protégé*, and though in his heart he thanked her for her protection of the orphan girl, he could never forgive her for depriving him of her society. He looked upon her as an ogress in a fair form, who guarded and hid from him his treasure. But the penetrating, sad look, that met his own as he accosted her, now disarmed him of his resentment, and he civilly inquired for her health, as she sunk ; overpowered by her feelings, upon a sofa, while he awaited the declaration of her errand.

After a pause, she spoke. "I have come," said she in a voice of deep sorrow, "on an errand of a painful nature—to give you back your ward."

"To give me back my Flora !" said Mr. Clarendon earnestly. "Why have you come to this decision ? Is it her wish ?" he continued in an excited tone.

"She is passive now, Mr. Clarendon. But I am going away, and she needs an asylum."

"One has been always ready for her here," said Mr. Clarendon with an accent of deep feeling ; "but I am surprised that you have so lost your discretion, as to trust her with me. Pray how have I altered in your estimation as to become a proper guardian for a young girl, who is certainly no less attractive than of old ? Am I more or less an anchorite ?"

"Mr. Clarendon," said Mrs. Linden in a tone of anguish. "I do not return her to you as I took her from you ?"

"How has she changed ? Tell me !—for the love of God what is the matter with her ? Is she ill ? Speak—I beg of you ?" Mr. Clarendon came nearer Mrs. Linden, and anxiously awaited her reply.

"Not in body—but in mind, our poor Flora is"—

Mr. Clarendon caught the arm of Mrs. Linden and held it as in a vice, while he muttered. "Do you tell me she is insane ?"

"I fear so—yes—partly so."

"Wretch ! Begone ! You are the cause of this ! And you have come to give her back to me ! Generous woman ! *My* Flora ! and without her reason ! Tell me how it has happened ? It is naught but fanaticism—you have crazed her—first by stealing her from the home she loved, and then by

your canting preaching. Yes—give her back to me, and let me save her before it is too late.”

“And have you no compunction, Mr. Clarendon, none for winning her young heart, and then leaving it to wither. Do you think this had no effect upon her delicately organized brain? She was a harp too finely strung for ruthless treatment.”

“Did I ever treat her harshly, Mrs. Linden?”

“No, too tenderly, if you did not wish to marry her.”

“I understand you, but I meant no harm to Flora. God knows I loved her, and that I love her still! Did she ever grieve for me?”

“Yes—till it has crazed her brain, and beguiled her of her reason. Still God has dealt gently with her. Ophelia was never sweeter in her madness, and she seems happy now. When I left her, she was arrayed in white; she thought herself your bride.”

Mr. Clarendon became pale and agitated, and his voice trembled as he said: “You have come to-day for your revenge, and you have had it in its fullest sense. Bring her back, and no power on earth shall separate us again.”

“But Mr. Clarendon, is this best? She loves you too well to meet you yet.”

A change came over the features of Mr. Clarendon. He had received a shock which overpowered him.

“You are right,” he said, after a pause, “I will to-day send a physician to her. I have no wish to see her. I begin to realize her case. Excuse me—there must be no delay. Poor Flora! Have her in readiness at twelve o’clock.” Mr. Clarendon hastily left the presence of Mrs. Linden, and sought retirement in his library, where but an hour since he had resolved to seek and marry the poor girl whom now he did not dare to meet. How bitterly he wished that he could recall the past; how void seemed now the world of pleasure, since he despaired of ever winning Flora! How beautiful, how sweet, her memory seemed to him in comparison with every other! And had he put out this light of his darkened existence? Ten thousand daggers pierced his soul at the overwhelming thought that she, so dear, so valued, was for ever lost to him.

At noon of the same day a carriage came to the door of Mrs. Linden, and Flora was borne away—she deemed, to her bridal.

An hour after, Rufus Wilton went to confer with his mother on the course which he had resolved to pursue regarding the will. He was calm, but haggard and pale. His eyes were bloodshot, and years seemed to have been added to his existence in a night. His plan was first to seek his father, with Mrs. Linden, and then to acquaint him with his knowledge of his crime, while his mother furnished the proof of his guilt.

Rufus waited long for the wife to prepare herself to meet her husband. And such a meeting, and for such a purpose, it was not strange that there should be delay! She at length came from her dressing-room in her deep black attire, while a veil of double crape concealed her face. It was her usual dress in public; and the son did not marvel at it. Her tall, proud form was erect, and her features composed. So she went forth, on the arm of her child, to do justice at last to the injured, to the sacrifice of her husband, and the sorrow and humiliation of her only son. She manifested no emotion on the journey, but silently observed the scenery, while Rufus watched her countenance with intense and painful interest.

When they had reached their destination, and were within view of "The Park," she dropped more closely her veil, and walked slowly up the avenue towards the old home from which she had fled in her youth, pausing only where the boughs seemed to interlace over her head. This had once been her favorite spot. The odor of shrub and tree came over her senses; over hill and dale, mountain and stream, her eyes wandered, as if in one glance she could recall the past. They then proceeded slowly up the steps of the piazza. Both were silent, and wholly absorbed by painful feeling. They reached the well-known colonnade where Rosa Wilton had so often sat; then through the hall, and into the dark, old oaken parlor; here remained the same old furniture, the same pictures, and heavy damask that had graced her bridal home. Like one bereft of reason, her glances wandered from object to object, yet rested on none.

"Let us go on," said she, in a whispered tone. Room after room they silently coursed through the spacious mansion. They passed the dark staircase, which she well remembered. But not until she reached her own room—the apartment where she had suffered from a husband's tyranny, where she parted with her infant boy, and stole at midnight from his father's side—did she betray emotion. Now she groaned aloud.

"Be calm, dear mother," said her son, "we have much to try us yet."

"Yes, that is true," she said mechanically, and then walked towards a mirror which last reflected her youthful beauty, and looked upon the change wrought by time and sorrow. She threw aside her close hat and veil, and to her son's astonishment, she wore no cap upon her head, which was richly adorned by a mass of dark-brown hair, which, though silvered with an occasional thread of grey, was still beautiful and luxuriant. Not a trace of color was now left on the once brilliant cheek, and the fire of her dark eye was softened into a mellow, saddened light. The elegant woman was there reflected, but the girlish Rosa Wilton was among the dreams of the past. She moved with the same dignity of carriage that had characterized her youthful appearance. The beauty of her rare smile yet lingered, but it was so seldom seen about her faintly-colored lips, that it seemed to the stranger to have for ever passed away.

Her dress was black velvet, the softest lace shading her exposed neck and throat.

"Are you ready now," said the son, as he gazed with pride and sorrow upon his beautiful parent. "He must go to-night."

"Yes, I am ready," said Rosa Wilton; "call him in now." But as she spoke, her lips grew white as her cheek.

After a short absence, Roger Wilton entered the presence of his wife. She rose to meet him, and looked a Juno in her magnificent but faded beauty. As the eye of Roger Wilton met hers, he was for an instant bewildered. He looked again and met her full glance—he staggered—his gaze was transfixed. He knew that she who had fled from his tyranny in her youth, had come again to his home; for what purpose he had no strength or courage then to ask. It was enough that the terror of his life had reappeared, bearing a small scroll in her hand. His cold eye was bent upon her face, while he inaudibly said,

"Rosa! is it thus we meet?"

"It is, and for a painful duty. Long years have fled since we parted, and since then I have kept well your *secret*. For *his* sake I have done this wrong. Flee now, while I bid you go, for ere to-morrow justice will be done him whom you defrauded."

"I defy you," said Roger Wilton, with livid rage. "Where is your proof of fraud?"

Rosa Wilton, at this query, turned towards her son, who was scarcely less pale than his father.

"It is all true, my father," said Rufus. "The will was rescued from the burning grate."

"Do you not remember the rustling in the twilight—the shadow on the wall? I caused them both, and I saved the burning will," said the pallid wife.

Rigid and motionless stood the convicted man. The son stepped forward, and seizing his arm, said, while the tears streamed from his eyes,—

"A steamer sails to-night; fly for *your* sake—for *mine*."

"Yes," the father muttered between his clenched teeth, and fled into another room. Soon a report of a pistol was heard,—a fall—and they that listened knew that Roger Wilton was no more among the living.

The dreadful tragedy was soon spread abroad, and amidst the excitement of the hour, Rosa Wilton had secretly fled. Her son found a slip of paper which she left, on which was written, "Seek not to find me now—we shall meet again."

Rufus Wilton's next duty was to seek Colonel Livingston. He longed to pass the trying scene awaiting him, and abide its consequences. He dared not go to Villacora, lest he should meet Cora. Her presence, he feared, would prevent the fulfillment of his duty. He penned a note, and sent it to the Colonel, requesting him to meet him on his father's grounds. The request was received while the latter was at dinner. The news of Roger Wilton's suicidal death had reached his ears, and he obeyed the summons doubtingly.

Rufus Wilton met him on the avenue, and in a calm, collected tone bade the Colonel retire with him to a private room within the mansion. After some hesitation the latter was led on, impelled by the earnestness of his manner and the mystery of the errand.

After both were seated, Rufus Wilton drew forth the rescued will, and handed it to the astonished man. His eyes grew blind while he looked upon the paper.

"Where did you find this?" he said with excitement of feeling.

"Ask no question, sir," he said. "Its recovery has caused my father's death. He has paid the penalty of his crime. And now we part. My debt to you, if God permits, I'll pay."

Innocently I have defrauded you of your own, but, thank Heaven, I have not also of your daughter."

With these words Rufus Wilton parted with the Colonel, and made immediate arrangements for his journey south, while the latter sought to acquaint Cora with the exciting occurrences which had taken place at the Park, and the recovery of the will. He was so much elated with the latter circumstance, that he scarcely observed the pallid hue of Cora's face, as she said: "And where is Rufus, papa?"

"Gone to Virginia, my daughter. He will write you from there. This change of circumstances naturally mortifies him, and it is possible, Cora, that he will release you from your engagement. It is an awkward situation for him, and he had better be away until the affair blows over. He is a clever fellow, and has behaved honorably, but his position is decidedly affected by the matter. You will be independent now, you know, and perhaps may change your own mind."

"Poor Rufus!" said Cora, in a tone of anguish; then covering her eyes, burst into tears, and went to her own room.

The Colonel was too much excited to observe her depression, though he wondered that she seemed so little pleased with the restoration of their property, and being himself so much occupied in thinking of the necessary steps to be taken to take possession of it, his thoughts naturally wandered from the situation of the young lovers.

His first movement, as in all cases of emergency, was to send for Mr. Clarendon, who immediately obeyed the summons, and heartily congratulated the Colonel on a matter of such importance to him. The latter was still puzzled regarding the recovery of the will, and had never been able to trace the source of the anonymous note, which had always encouraged him that he should yet come in possession of his father's estate.

Mr. Clarendon came to Villacora, but in broken spirits. He learned with indifference that Rufus Wilton had himself released Cora from her engagement to him, and with little thought of anything but the situation of Flora, proceeded to the adjustment of the Colonel's business. He met Cora, and congratulated her on the accession of fortune, but before the words had escaped his lips, he saw how much more she needed compassion than any sympathy for joyful emotion. Her sweet face wore a dejected look, and her languid eyes were often tearful. That there was occasion for satisfaction and

happiness, she was often told, and the air of deference which even the servants assumed, told her that she held a new position. The heiress of the vast property of Robert Livingston, was no longer an obscure individual, and a great effort was made by hosts of admiring friends, to draw Cora from seclusion, and to present her to the fashionable world as a beauty and an heiress.

But we are in advance of our tale, for not many days had passed after Rufus Wilton's absence, before she received a letter from him. A bright flush of joy kindled her cheek, on its reception, and with hope at her heart, she went to her own chamber to peruse the lines of her beloved Wilton.

It ran thus :

"You are sad, I know, dearest Cora, even in your joy, for your heart is not one to forget those who sorrow, while you sympathize in the weal of others. When we last met, you remember, with what pain I foreboded our separation ; I was somewhat prepared for the shock, that has humiliated and crushed me. It is not the loss of property I deplore ; that I can cheerfully resign, but that in dishonor and shame, I am the son of one who has for years defrauded your father, having myself been educated and supported from his inheritance, and squandered lavishly sums that might have added so essentially to his and your comfort—that still I have presumed to offer to you my hand. But Cora, you will believe me guiltless of intended wrong. I cannot reveal the manner in which I came in possession of this long lost will, but you will not think that I secreted it ; had I done so, why have I now delivered it to its owner ?

"The world will look upon my father's family as dishonored, and his humiliating death but as a part of his erring life. The name of Wilton is now one of shame, and until it is redeemed by my own exertion, I could never offer it to any woman, much less to the daughter of one who has ever scorned it.

"My dearly loved one, to part with you, is like severing my heart from its tenement ; I shall dream of you by night and by day. I shall see your tears fall for him, who will love you as his life. But we shall be separated by a barrier that cannot be removed. I shall go forth into the world, a poor man, with a sorrowing heart. I am unused to the struggles of adversity, and to contend with them will, at first, cost me pain ; but until I can appear on my native soil, independent in my circumstances, the stigma attached to my father's name washed away in that of my own honorable reputation, I shall not reappear on the shores of the Hudson.

"Don't mourn for me, darling, my own heart-ache is enough. You are commencing life under auspices brilliant and beautiful. You will have many adorers of your fortune, and more heart-worshippers. I do not wish you to sacrifice yourself for me. As time wears away, you may think less of me, and, perchance, another will take my place in your love. If so, dear one, remember that you are released from your engagement. I could not see you before I left; your sweet face would have maddened me, and disabled me from obeying my sense of duty, towards you and myself.

"Farewell, my only loved, write me, if but one line,

"RUFUS WILTON."

With heartfelt sobs Cora concluded this letter. Of what value to her was her proud fortune? It had now no power to make her happy, and she looked upon the prospect of wealth, but as the commencement of misery. She replied to Wilton briefly, but feelingly, again pledging her vows, promising fidelity to him, through all ills. Cora never allowed her griefs to afflict others, so she strove to be cheerful, and to enter sympathizingly into her father's plans for increasing their comfort. Mr. Clarendon was much with them, and Cora observed his abstraction of mind, even while conversing with her. At first she attributed it to his engrossing business cares, but finally perceived that a settled gloom was evidently creeping over his spirits. He seemed misanthropic and dull, after coming from her father's study, and though friendly and kind in his manner towards her, his reserve became habitual, and unapproachable.

The Colonel had resolved to repair his father's old home, and soon to take possession of the residence. The necessary proceedings had been taken, to secure to him the entire estate of the late Roger Wilton, which added ten years, seemingly, to the life of its heir, and had the softening effect of chasing from his brow, many wrinkles that care and anxiety had there gathered.

It was an exciting day to the Colonel, when he entered the doors of his childhood's home, its owner and legal inheritor; and though Cora accompanied her father, sadly, joylessly to the long coveted mansion, she seemed happy, in her father's eyes, for she smiled sympathizingly in his enthusiasm, for all its well-remembered haunts.

She chose for herself the old room of Rufus Wilton, and with mingled sadness and hope, looked forward to an uncertain

future. One evening, after a day of unceasing attention, upon a crowd of visitors from the city, Mr. Clarendon sought the society of Cora, she having wandered off among the old willow trees, the favorite resort of her absent lover.

"You are romantic to-night," said he. "For a young heiress, you ought to be calculating your chances for your next winter's conquests, and picturing to yourself a more brilliant season than you have ever known in town, Miss Cora."

"Do these pleasures seem to you paramount to all others?" said Cora. "You ought to be a judge of the value of the amusements of fashionable life, whether they satisfy the heart or not."

"I do not seek satisfaction," replied Mr. Clarendon; "excitement is the food of fashionable devotees. This drives away weariness, the blues, and deadens disappointment. What do you suppose a miserable bachelor like myself has to amuse him, but his books and his world?"

The query was made playfully, but Cora saw that sadness lurked beneath it. She did not reply, and Mr. Clarendon continued. "Don't you suppose you would be happier where you could feed on adulation, and in the intoxication of a round of city amusements, engross yourself until you cared not which gay scene came next, provided that in it you forgot all but the pleasures of sense—scarcely knowing whether you had a mind, a heart, or any purpose in life?"

"I might be happy for the time," said Cora, "but I believe that there is no real abiding peace where one has no moment to reflect."

"And yet you were happy last winter in town," said Mr. Clarendon.

Cora's cheek grew red and pale as she said: "Yes, but I do not know that the gay world, or its adulation, made me so."

"No, Cora, I do not think it did, and then I was envious of the source of your happiness. But I have since changed. I would now restore you, if I could, to the same happy frame of mind."

A sweet smile of gratitude showed Mr. Clarendon that his genuine kind feeling was appreciated. The derangement of Flora had worked an entire revolution in Louis Clarendon. She was ever before him, reproaching him for the sacrifice of her intellect, while the promise he made to her dying mother came chiming on

his memory, as she gave him her child, echoing his own words, "*I will keep the trust.*"

Had he kept it? he asked himself, during the hours of sunlight, and in the darkness of the night, while he fancied his once beautiful idol but an object of compassion?

He blamed himself for his reckless pursuit of pleasure, to the sacrifice of all he loved. He now looked upon Cora Livingston, and penitently resolved that he would never throw a straw in the way of her happiness, selfishly as he had pursued her, regardless of all but his worldly pride and ambition. She was now free, and sought by a crowd of courtiers, from whom it might gratify his pride to carry off the prize.

He knew the real cause of her sadness, and interested himself in the fate of Rufus Wilton. He learned that he was ill in an obscure town, and suffering from poverty. He ascertained his location, and determined to acquaint Cora with the fact, and test her love for her once gay suitor.

"I thank you," said Cora, in reply to his last words. "Time can only do that. For my father's sake, I hope to be cheerful."

"Would you like to know the situation of Wilton?" said Mr. Clarendon.

"Oh! yes, at this moment," said Cora.

"What would you do, if you knew that he was ill, poor, and suffering?"

"I would go to him, if God permitted me," said Cora.

"Come, then, with me, to-morrow," said Mr. Clarendon.

"With you?" said Cora, doubtingly.

"Yes, with me, Cora; consider me, henceforth, your brother. I know now how strong is the passion of love, in woman—I know by its loss, how to prize it for another."

"Oh! Mr. Clarendon, I will show my trust in you—I will believe that you wish but my happiness in this."

"And that of the noble heart on whom it rests."

"Heaven bless you," murmured Cora, with tearful eyes.

"Will you tell your father of our going?"

"Oh! yes, I will never deceive him."

"Noble girl," said Mr. Clarendon, "you have taught me the beauty of truth and devotion, and when I think that I myself have cast away as much—a being who would have sweetened and blessed my existence, I feel that the punishment I bear is well merited. I owe Wilton an atonement for my

gross treatment of him. Few would have so resigned you, Cora."

As Mr. Clarendon ceased, Cora flew to her father's side, and with gushing tears told him of the sufferings and situation of Wilton and of her wish to go to him.

"My daughter!" said Colonel Livingston, in a tone of amazement, "what a sacrifice of your dignity! what dereliction of propriety. How can you think of anything so imprudent?"

"But, papa, he is ill, and perhaps made so by the sufferings brought of late upon him."

"But he can hardly expect a young lady of your position to nurse him, my daughter. How did you think of going on this absurd errand, and with whom?"

"Mr. Clarendon will go with me. He approves of it, papa, and I will take my maid with me. Oh! I do so wish to tell him that I cannot so easily give him up."

"How indelicate, my child. I did not think this of you, Cora—you to sue for the love of a fugitive from!"

"My father, say no cruel thing of the noblest of God's creatures. Rufus Wilton has resigned me, but the pride of the high-souled man has driven him to it. Oh! who can be named in comparison with my poor, sorrowing Rufus?"

"Will Mr. Clarendon protect you, and bring you safely back? It is a fruitless, romantic errand, but the young man has too much spirit, I believe, to thus win back his lost estate. The ride may benefit you, to the village of Haymount, where they say he is. If you go, take my carriage, and make your errand ostensibly one of business. Mr. Clarendon will see to this."

Cora kissed her father gratefully, and went back to the parlor to tell Mr. Clarendon that she had succeeded in gaining his consent, if her errand was kept secret.

The day following, Cora and Mr. Clarendon left the park for the village where they understood that Wilton had gone for a brief sojourn. The distance was but twenty miles, which they accomplished after a pleasant drive. As the carriage drove up to the country inn, it attracted much attention and drew towards the window of an humble dwelling, the languid form of Rufus Wilton, who was just recovering from illness. By his side, supporting him, was his mother, whom he had followed, and whose destiny he resolved in life to share.

The equipage attracted the eyes of the dejected invalid, and

he continued to look upon it with curiosity and interest, but when to his utter amazement, Mr. Clarendon stepped forth, followed by a form and face which he could not mistake, he leaned against the wall like one paralyzed with suffering. "Could they be married?" his heart asked, and "was this their bridal tour?" His reason denied the false supposition, but the fears of an unsettled feeble brain, occasioned by congestion, overpowered his sane convictions, and for a moment he believed it true, that his forsaken Cora had become the bride of Mr. Clarendon.

"Let us go from here, dear mother," he said, "Let me not meet them—they are happy, and I will not have them look upon the miserable. Ah, Cora, this was too soon—to cruel, to thus early strike the blow!"

"You are feeble, Rufus, and are harboring a delusion. Look, they are coming this way, my son."

The invalid roused from his sunken attitude, and stood upright. His manly form strove to assume its erect bearing, and his face became, by a strong effort, composed and calm in its noble aspect. His cheeks were thin, and his large eyes sunken,—their fire was dimmed, but at intervals they flashed with feeling.

To the door of Wilton's lodgings, Cora and Mr. Clarendon came; she, so simple in her loveliness, no one would have deemed her the daughter of the proud and stately Colonel Livingston.

The former inquired for Wilton. When he stepped forward with so firm a step, his mother watched him in amazement. His debility seemed to have suddenly departed, and in its place, a burning fever to have risen.

"I have brought you a comforter," said Mr. Clarendon kindly, while Cora stepped forward, and met the brilliant eyes, and felt the clasp of Rufus Wilton's burning fingers.

"Cora," said he, "I did not think to meet you here." Mr. Clarendon at the moment disappeared, leaving the lovers alone.

"But I came, dear Rufus—oh, are you sorry?"

"How have you come, Cora—as Mr. Clarendon's wife?" said Wilton, commanding his voice.

"Oh, no, you are wild to think so; I have come to ask you to return to those who love you."

"Ah, so I dreamed, Cora, in my illness; but you seemed an

angel, not a woman then, yet, I bade the tempter flee, and so I must say to you, sweet one."

"Rufus, do you not love me longer?" said Cora, with a modest blush.

"Yes, too well, my precious girl, to dare now to trust my heart to tell its love."

"Then, oh, come back," said Cora, while her golden curls touched the cheek that bent forward near her own. "Come back, or take me with you." Tremblingly, softly, were these words whispered in the ear that listened to an appeal that thrilled and maddened the pulses of the passionate, but proud, high-spirited Wilton.

"Cora," he replied, while he kissed the white forehead that he raised from his arm, "has it come to this? oh, would to God, I could take you, darling. Can you wait for me through long years, wait until I return for you in honor; wait until independently I can come to claim you, without one emotion of shame, while I ask you from your proud parent."

"For ever, Rufus, if God wills that we must now part?"

"God bless, and keep you then—oh, you are not as I feared, the wife of Clarendon; how came you with him?"

"He proposed to bring me to you—he is your friend, dear Rufus, and will aid you."

"No, I ask no aid, Cora, much less from him; I forgive, but can't forget his words."

"Won't you accept it from—from her you love?" said Cora, in the softest whisper.

"My sweet, gentle one, this too, I must refuse—let me go forth alone, unaided."

"But you are ill."

"I shall be ill no longer—come to my heart, and swear in your young beauty, pride, and wealth, that naught but love, pure, and holy, brought you to your wretched lover—that not one emotion of pity ruled you."

"Oh, Rufus, I cannot speak falsely, 'twas both, but love overruled every feeling of my heart, it gave me courage, for I need it to seek you."

Rufus Wilton had never so wholly loved the spotless being, who had risen above petty scruples that would have ruled her sex, and thrown herself in her proud beauty, at her wretched lover's feet, asking, in his hour of deep humiliation, to share his fate,

"But you know not, dear Rufus," said Cora, "how hard it will be to suffer privation, after enjoying every luxury."

"Oh, stop, Cora, *you* knew what privation was, while I was living on your wealth. Do not fear for me; I have now something to struggle for. I have education, and, I trust, ability. I shall go to Virginia, near the birthplace of my mother, and commence such a life as I have never known; for it will be one of toil. But," a smile now lighted his features, "it will be sweetened by the stimulus I shall have to work. Come nearer, darling, for I have a secret now to tell you; I have found my long-lost mother, and she will accompany me to her childhood's home."

"Where is she," said Cora, eagerly, "I long to see her."

"I will call her, Cora, but not yet, these precious moments, I am jealous of. I did not hope for such bliss as this on earth. What led you to think that you could come to see me?"

"I did not stop to think; I only knew that you would not come to me—that you would give me up, because you were poor and sad, while I had wealth, and at least the heart to comfort you."

"Blessed girl! I have been ill, and very wretched; and now I fear that you may repent this step. Does your father approve of it?"

"He consented," said Cora, with a smile.

"I understand you, dearest—wait awhile, and then, if he refuses his daughter to me, I will not fear to ask for her. And so you have left your cottage home?"

"Yes; and I have your old room, that overlooks the water—but I cried to part with Villacora. I shall make papa give the place to me for its old associations."

"And I hope some day to present you one with new charms," said Wilton, "where your foot has never trod, and one purchased by my labor. I shall not be satisfied with another, unless a legacy should be left to me—this I will not despise. But as I have no relative, to my knowledge, but my bachelor uncle, who is buried alive in India, I see no chance of this—so I must go to work."

"And now, I must go home."

"So soon?"

"Yes, Rufus, we must return before night."

"With Mr. Clarendon," Wilton sighed. "Well, bless you,

and him, for this ; it is hard to part, but remember that we do so in hope. Your curls are long and soft as ever—give me one before you go, bright and sunny as its owner."

"Then, Rufus, you must choose it."

"Ah, it is a pity to sever it from its sister locks ; but you must remember it is all of you that I can take away."

"Not all, Rufus."

"No, not all, I trust, but I shall look upon it, like a sunbeam gilding my hopes. Here it is, a sweet curl, and I'll keep it until you give me all the rest."

"Supposing they should be grey, would you want them then ?" said Cora, smiling.

"Yes, for I shall not see them change. Like the sky at sunset, thy hues may fade and soften into age ; but even night will have its loveliness ; for the brightness of my star will still remain undimmed. Oh, my darling Cora, preserve your beauty, while you can ; but cherish more purely the soul within ; this is a treasure worth preserving. The heart cannot grow old or grey."

Cora lifted her eyes, and for a moment they fell beneath the tender glance that met them, as the low "good-bye" was exchanged, with mingled hope and fear. But she saw the cheek that grew paler, as she put her hand in his ; and looking up with trustful sweetness, met the long fervent kiss, that told of joy and hope—and fled away. As she passed through the hall, a form, once seen, appeared in view, and in the arms of Mrs. Linden, she received a fond mother's greeting. She wondered, yet asked then no explanation of the mystery that united Mrs. Linden with the wife of Roger Wilton.

Mr. Clarendon awaited Cora's return ; and although he saw her burning cheek, and tearful eyes, he said nothing, but hurried her away.

Cora returned home a different being. The rose came back to her cheek, and brightened on her fresh, sweet lips. Like a glad child, she again sung in her grandfather's old and spacious halls ; her ample purse enabled her to do all the good her heart prompted ; and many an aching heart she caused to bless her fairy footsteps. A retinue of servants now filled the places of Sophy and Judy—though they were both retained in some capacity. Judy was elated with the change from the cottage to the park ; though she often stopped to swing on the front gate at Villacora, and to climb the fence, to examine

the old hen-roost ; and had several times received a severe reproof from Cora, for bringing home little blue eggs, that she had stolen out of the nests in the trees. It was a grand place for her to rove about sunset, over the grounds ; and after her work was done, Cora often went with her over the fields, and into the green clover patches, and among the sweet buckwheat blossoms for a ramble, and Judy was bright enough to know that she never wearied her young mistress, when she talked about the "beautiful young man" that used to go about with his gun and rod, over the same rural grounds. And Cora never despised the company of her little black-eyed Judy ; for besides the assistance she afforded in taking down bars, and helping her over stiles, her little active body was always something to laugh at, and her merry voice whispering at the dullest moment. The Colonel was never more in his element, than in receiving, in his parental home, his numerous guests, who daily feasted at his table, and partook of his generous flow of wine. The many brilliant and fashionable suitors that flocked around the pathway of his beautiful daughter, ever met with his cordial reception—indifferently and coldly as they were treated by Cora. No expense was spared on her personal appearance ; and even her cousin, the ever elegantly appressed Mrs. Sidney, was astonished at her cousin's exquisite, yet simple toilette. But Cora's happiest moments were, when fleeing from all the pomp and parade of her father's new home, she could, in a simple flowing dress and gipsy hat, rove off by herself, and beside some old clump of wood violets, sit down to feast over the letters of her beloved Wilton.

At first they spoke of trying and difficult circumstances, when his heart seemed to fail him of meeting success ; then of greater progress in the medical profession, which he had chosen, and of the eminence which he had better prospect of attaining, from the devotion he had paid to his favorite study while in Europe, and in the hospitals abroad. He now never regretted the hours that he had spent, in his love for the science of surgery, in witnessing operations, and in reading medical books, as an amusement, rather than as a source of pecuniary benefit.

In the city and vicinity of Richmond he soon became widely known as an accomplished physician, and one devoted to a profession, which he followed with zeal and ability. But of this, Wilton said nothing in his letters to Cora but words of love and

encouragement fortified her heart in his absence, and at the expiration of six months, with feelings of joy and gratitude, she assured herself that there would in time be no barrier between the happiness of herself and her absent Wilton. Dearly were his long letters prized, and fondly, devotedly, were they answered, while smiles chased away the bright drops as they fell, as kind words, with their charmed power, made her forget the trials and perplexities under which they were penned.

Thus was Cora made happy by the sweet harbinger, hope ; while the change in her own situation, derived its chief satisfaction from the elevation of her father's spirits. He seemed to ask no greater comfort than to pace his gravel walks, and survey his mansion, with its antique carvings, and old venerated pillars, that had been the admiration of his boyhood. Another source of pleasure lay in driving his fast horses, which, in Cora's opinion, were both too high-spirited and too gay, for his years ; but her father was fond of the exercise, strangely as his taste accorded with his prudence, on most matters ; and not until he had been thrice run away with, and received several bad bruises, was he aware of his temerity. He had neither much discretion in his choice of coachmen, thinking much more of their appearance on the box, than of their skill in driving. Change, too, from abstemious living, and his one glass of wine at dinner, to choice viands, and such luxurious entertainments as his increase of friends made necessary, brought on mysterious pains, which he at first called neuralgia, and rheumatism, but was finally compelled to believe to be twinges of gout. But this affliction brought many agreeable physicians to his house, whose courtesy and sympathy afforded some consolation, making him feel that the preservation of his health and life had afforded them hours of solicitude and pain, nearly equivalent to his own. It was gratifying, too, to the Colonel, to see his well-trained servants, now numerous, obsequious, and reverential to his slightest nod ; though he sometimes thought that there was not as much quiet in his spacious kitchen, nor quite as much comfort as when he would toast his feet over Sophy's old bright kitchen stove. Sometimes, too, he thought of the old fire-place at the cottage, and the big log that was always blazing, with a bright tea-kettle steaming for his hot night potation. To be sure, there was now hot water enough, but his toddy had to come through the hands of a host of darkies, to the danger of being either cold or diminished on

its way, instead of smoking hot from good old Sophy, or what was better still, manufactured and drank solely by himself. Judy then was of more consequence, and something to be laughed at or scolded ; but she was now a cipher in the circle of woolly-headed turbaned usurpers, who had set both her and Sophy aside as supernumeraries, good-for-nothing specimens of country cooks and waiters. So Judy grew idle and roving in her habits, and Sophy sulky, both circumstances which annoyed the Colonel, especially when his big toe twinged.

Cora, too, with all his pride and ambition for her, did not seem to care any more for style than simplicity, and provoking as it was, looked as well in her pretty muslin robes, with fresh rose-buds in her hair, and on her bosom, as with all the splendid silks and costly jewels that he could adorn her ; and sometimes he thought prettier ; then what father who had spent his life in yearning as he had done, for wealth for his beloved child, could not but have been disappointed to have seen her so regardless of its importance, and the advantages accruing from it ! It was true, he thought, she seemed rejoiced to know that Villacora was redeemed, and that her father's debts were all paid ; but on the whole, he seriously believed that she awoke at her little cottage home with smiles full as sweet, and that she loved the old robins that sung at her parlor window, even better than the new English mocking birds that he had purchased for her. She had now a much greater variety in her pets, but still the little King Charless and costly greyhounds, and St. Bernards, that were petted around in their gold-ringed collars, were all deserted, if good old Frisk showed his homely nose in the group. Besides all these annoyances, Cora seemed to think the strawberries, or cherries no sweeter at The Park, than those she had gathered in the old garden, and ridiculous as it might seem, she always walked fast by the old library, where the gloomy misanthrope Roger Wilton shot himself. But there was one place that had its pleasant associations—for around her room had been left many relics of its old occupant,—sketches from his pencil adorned the walls, and lay loosely about in the old table drawers, and in the window bloomed a geranium and tea rose of his own rearing ; but nothing that had belonged to her absent lover she thought more of, than a little grey squirrel that ate from her hand as tamely as it had fed from his own.

The Colonel was about having its neck wrung, as belonging

to the old occupants, when Cora remembered that Rufus had told her of the capture of his favorite, and rescued it from his hands. So there were times when the Colonel weighed the advantages of great wealth with a competency, and the balance was not so much on the side of the former, as it had looked in the distance. Still he secretly rejoiced that Rufus Wilton had sufficient discretion not to presume to make himself conspicuous at the Park, as it would have been painful to see him there actually poor, after he had recovered his estate by the young man's honesty, though the world talked a good deal more of his father's want of the virtue. He hoped that Cora would yet see that her station in life exacted a more suitable alliance than her romantic attachment for a boy of no especial reputation was likely to furnish her.

Still he saw that it amused her to write letters, and the young man was so far off, he on the whole, concluded that it improved her composition to practice in epistolary correspondence, and he secretly hoped that she made no unlady-like blots or blunders. He sometimes thought that he would like to examine them, but Judy always manifested especial delight in delivering Cora's letters to the waiter for the post, and she knew as well the handwriting of the correspondent who replied, as she did his queer, big eyes.

There was but one in the household beside himself, that seemed to appreciate, as he did, the grandeur of his new home, and that was the stately Lady Livingston in canvas, who had for more than a century stood proudly erect, and since he knew her, queening it over his family coat of arms, and who seemed now to look down upon late proceedings with an eye to their elevation and proper dignity concerning their restoration to their rights. The Colonel was especially proud of his ancestral relation, when visited by any of his family connections, who latterly felt great interest in their retired cousin, who, they confessed, had been for years "a man of peculiarly intellectual tastes, possessing an extraordinary fancy for a secluded life, and rural occupations; it was certainly their duty to draw him out more into society; it was such a shame that such a finished gentleman, and moreover, such an ornament to the family, should remain buried from the world." So the hitherto quiet Colonel had to be dragged out, to dine and to sup, until he began seemingly to believe that he was getting dyspeptic, and a disease in his eyes, which created great redness about them.

But it was vastly agreeable to the Colonel to find that he was appreciated, for he had always had a favorable opinion of himself, and had ever felt more respect for Mr. Clarendon for the reason that he seemed to agree with him on this tenacious point.

But now, for some reason, Mr. Clarendon seemed to hold back, and sometimes gently insinuated that sudden changes in a man's habits were injurious, which the Colonel resented as an insinuation that he had not always been a man of consideration and importance.

Besides, there was now and then a curl evincing contempt on the lip of his old friend, when he saw some of his old wine-bibbing, broken-down town acquaintances flattering the Colonel on his choice wines, and fast horses, the merits of each of which they hoped often to have the pleasure of trying. Mr. Clarendon might have unconsciously betrayed some such feeling, for he remembered these same parasites asking him "how he could bore himself with that tedious old limb of down-trodden aristocracy—that the daughter might be a Hebe for aught they knew, but that blood and beauty were poor attractions for them." And sometimes he could have kicked them from their well-cushioned seats, where they sat with their blooming noses and porcelain teeth, uttering soft nothings, all that they were capable of, into the unheeding ears of Cora. How exalted she now seemed to him, in her pure, simple loveliness, untouched as she was, alike by adulation, and new devotion.

With a feeling akin to pride, for he could never be indifferent to Cora, he watched the coolness and dignity of her manner, while overwhelmed with the high-bred courtesies of the many friends and relatives, who were so suddenly impressed with the importance of introducing her into society, forgetful, meanwhile, of the "pretty country cousin" that they had nearly overlooked, at the wedding of her condescending cousin, Fanny.

In her *tête-à-têtes* with Cora, Mrs. Sidney often alluded to the "poor fellow," Rufus Wilton, while she congratulated her that she had so fortunately disposed of him. Mr. Sidney also smoothed down his scratch, and laughed at the lucky escape of his "little coz." The convulsive effort sometimes proved too much for the nerves of the amused gentleman, whereupon his composed wife handed him a glass of wine, seeing that his face twitched, which foreboded a spasm; and as he was away from home, she preferred the affair postponed.

Cousin Fanny and her husband now often came to the Park; she thought it a sweet country-place, and so nice for Mr. Sidney, for he and the Colonel could gout it together, while she rejuvenated in her cousin's elegant carriage, with the young, but somewhat *rustic* heiress.

She had of late discovered that the country air agreed with her, and had become less afraid of toads and grasshoppers; perhaps there were not so many at the grand "Park" as at Villacora, and she was able to luxuriate with the last novel, *en déshabillé*, to her most extravagant and voluptuous ideas of the *dolce far niente*, notwithstanding the horrid country noises of which she had once complained. Then, too, cousin Fanny had serious hopes of making something finally quite stylish out of her *chère petite* Cora. So the occupants of the Park were becoming entirely different individuals from the retired father and daughter that once lived so quietly at the cottage.

CHAPTER. XXV.

Tho' close the link that bound them, -
Yet hath Heaven a closer tie
To the true-hearted given.

MRS. ESLING.

"WHAT do you think of my plan, doctor?" said Mr Clarendon to Dr. Vale. "Will it not effect her recovery as soon as any other? The cottage is lovely and secluded, and at a favorable distance from town. It will be an entire change to her. She will be regaled with all that can gratify the senses, and have pure air to invigorate her bodily health, the feeble condition of which affects much her state of mind. This is a great affliction, doctor; this poor child I have taken deep interest in. Will not her reason return with restored health of body?" continued Mr. Clarendon, cagerly and feelingly.

"I hope so," replied the physician. "Mental trouble, however, I am inclined to think, has been the primary cause of this malady. How has she lived of late, and what have been her habits?"

"Her life has been secluded, without society or exercise, and she has been much devoted to books and music."

"Are you sure that no peculiar anxiety has been preying upon her mind? The activity of her brain has, perhaps, been too great for the strength of her body. Proper regimen, suitable diet, and an entire change of scene and associations, may restore her, if the malady is not hereditary. As you seem opposed to my plan I will try yours, and devote myself to her exclusively."

"Only cure her, doctor, and you may name your own reward. You have seen her before, and are aware from whence she came to me. You must, too, know the painful anxiety I feel, for from a child she has been much under my care."

"I was," replied the doctor, "at the death-bed of her mother, and a more interesting patient I never had. She excited my sympathy as much as does your lovely ward in her melancholy situation; and, Clarendon, singular revelations that death-bed brought to light, which to me were confidential. They can never be imparted to any one but the man she marries."

"Not previous to her marriage, doctor, should that ever take place?"

"No; they will die with me if the daughter of Isora Giocanti remains unwedded. How deeply that fond mother felt for her child to be left orphaned and desolate, no one, but one so situated, I suppose, can ever realize. Mrs. Islington, as she was called, was a woman of exquisite sensibility, and had you not taken the little one for which she suffered, I should have been her guardian, out of pity for the mother."

"Would to God you had," murmured Clarendon, inaudibly.

"But," continued the doctor, "when I heard your words of comfort, and witnessed the fervor of the act, as you promised to guard and protect the little Flora, I was struck with the generous words you uttered, and since then I have ever taken an interest in your career and hers. Pardon me, Clarendon, but I fear this child has loved you."

"Do you think that she will ever recover?" replied Clarendon, with agitation.

"We will use our best efforts. Such minds, such temperaments, are most apt to wander under excitement of intense feeling. But had she led a different life, this might not have

occurred. Her soul has fed upon its own bright fires, until it has consumed her reason. I will not ask you to assist me in her removal."

"No, I cannot," replied Mr. Clarendon, "did you think it best; but should any amendment take place, send for me immediately."

"Yes, when she is entirely restored, but not before. From my experience with such patients, I have great hope; but hereafter her life must be a tranquil, happy one."

"Doctor, if I can make it so, it shall be! The cottage which I design for her reception is now in readiness to receive her. It is furnished and in order. Servants are there established, and a nurse, and a young companion who is familiar with such cases. Here, if the poor girl retains her old love of luxury, she will be gratified."

After the foregoing conversation, Mr. Clarendon and the doctor parted; the former in a gloomy and wretched frame of mind. He took from choice the circuit that carried him past the humble abode from which he had brought little Flora as a child. How well he remembered, as he approached the house, the soft, pale face, lighted with its brilliant eyes, that knelt against the window seat, awaiting him to take her to the opera; but more vividly, he pictured the sorrowing child by the death-bed of her young mother!—then, too, came the last tragic scene, when he vowed to guard and cherish the orphan, ere he tore her from that struggling, dying clasp, and bore her to his home.

But these pictures vanished, for in the past others arose, dyed in rosier hues, when, in almost Oriental beauty, the once pale child reclined on his couches of luxury, a thing to be loved and worshiped. How he had feasted in thought upon her transcendent charms, her simple loveliness, when with him she had drunk the intoxication of love's bewildering cup.

"Ah!" he murmured to himself, "how have I abused the trusting faith of her girlhood!—how have I cast her off as a worthless bauble, and left her to feed upon her passionate dreams, until the iron has entered her soul, and her brain has been crazed with sorrow! Poor Flora!" he mused, "I cannot even look upon thee now! It would madden me to know thee unconscious of my presence!"

Mr. Clarendon's mind was harrowed with his new and unlooked for affliction. He proceeded towards the cottage in the

outskirts of the city, which he had destined for the temporary abode of Flora. It was evening as he entered the iron enclosure, composed of the costliest fretwork, in which stood the miniature gem of exquisite architecture—a flower-wreathed pile. The western sky brightened the pale, pink hue of the stone edifice, which was ornamented by balconies shut in with framework of iron ; over which, crimson, pink and white roses climbed, and twined themselves in and out of the delicate railings.

From the roof, hung low a border of lacework, corresponding with the open iron below, upon which the flowering vines crept, and hung in festoons downward, again to seek, in another archway, the fantastic roof. A courtyard, bordered by hawthorn and boxwood, and covered with a carpet of rich velvety green, was enclosed in front of the dwelling, in the centre of which a fountain sent high its rainbow flood, falling over the sweet-scented grass in glittering beauty. The glass doors of the dwelling each opened outwards upon a mosaic-floored piazza, whose pillars reflected the evening sunlight like crystallized marble. Crimson and purple bells, in which humming birds nestled, hung in glossy-leaved vines about their fairy-like supporters, and crept under the archway.

The fragrance on the air was of aromatic sweetness, and the gushing water, as it came dripping and cool over the flowers and grass, refreshing and beautiful. Shrubs of the pomegranate, and orange-blossoms filled the balconies, and mingled their perfume with the roses.

Mr. Clarendon was charmed with the exterior of the little cottage, and went within. Here the most delicate luxury prevailed. The soft, subdued light that came through the stained glass of the windows, fell on the flower-blossoming carpet, and over the couches of rosewood and satin, among which stood graceful forms of statuary.

Thus lovely was the pretty spot which Mr. Clarendon sought for Flora. A beautiful, but more secluded room he had destined for her private apartment, where musical instruments were placed, and objects to amuse her fancy. He knew that even in her derangement, which was but of a mild and partial character, she exhibited her tastes, and manifested no violence. All had been done that a princess could ask for ; and he now turned from the exquisite cage, and sighed heavily, for he thought of the bright plumaged bird that was to become, he

feared, a wild—if softly fluttering—occupant. He returned home, lonely and miserable ; his books ceased to interest him, and his business engagements became wearisome. His heart had flown back to the poor wandering Flora, and he felt that life was worthless to him, if borne down by the consciousness that he had wrecked her bright intellect, and crushed the warm heart that was filled with love for him.

The following evening he again sought her destined asylum. He knew that she was then to take possession of it, with her physician and attendants. He came to see that all was in readiness for her reception. He looked with anxiety upon the face of her benevolent nurse, and with feelings of satisfaction upon the sweeter one of the young girl whom he had engaged for her maid. After impressing upon them earnestly the importance of the fulfillment of their duty, and of obedience to the orders of Dr. Vale, he directed tea to be in readiness, and considered what delicacies she had best loved. Thus inconsiderate was the lover, who had forgotten that her physician might interdict all that he might procure for her.

With pleasure he had surveyed the luxuriance of beautiful things around him, and sat down to await her arrival. He had, for a moment, forgotten her situation—but suddenly rose and anxiously paced the room. The strong man trembled at the dread uncertainty of her condition, and the thought that she might shun, and, perhaps, hate him, agonized and dismayed him.

But while he meditated, a carriage drove to the gate. He rose to leave, but again turned. Should he not stop, and see his own work?—all that was left of poor Flora ! Hope, again, arose in his heart. “ Oh ! ” he mused, “ may I not be disappointed, and my darling seem again as of old. I will await her. I will see her if but at a distance.” He felt that he could not leave her yet, and when she alighted, his heart leaped with joy. He stood concealed behind a curtain. She entered the gate on the arm of her physician, and walked up the court-yard, apparently delighted. He might have wished her less gay. She wandered among the flowers, and taking off her bonnet, filled the crown with them, while she sang the song he loved.

Mr. Clarendon watched the glance of her eye, as it fired and softened alternately ; and he thought that he had never seen her appear more rational. His heart had thrilled with

hope. She looked up as she entered. He caught her own lovely smile. In fancy, she was again his petted Flora.

"Will you come in now?" said Dr. Vale.

"Oh, yes," said Flora. "Shall we stay to tea?" Her face brightened with seeming intelligence, her voice was sweet and musical, as when she had sang to him in her city home. He started from behind the curtain, and coming forward, caught her hand, and called her his "dear Flora." The poor girl opened wide her eyes, and with a shudder, cried, while the color left her cheeks and lips, "Oh! take me away—it is he! Will he kill me? Oh, take me and hide me." The look of terror and wildness which Flora gave Mr. Clarendon; the appeal of her words to him on whose arm she leaned, and her aversion to himself, caused in him a feeling of faintness. He fled from the cottage miserable, and without hope.

His own words, "I will keep the trust," again sung like a chime of funeral knells on his ear, and in his fitful slumbers, that night, an angel form seemed near him, saying, "Where is my child? and what is her fate?" He awoke a deeply-sorrowing man. When Mrs. Linden had lured her from him, anger had mingled with his disappointed passion, and he had longed the hope in his heart, that she would return to him, penitent for her desertion. But now, as he dispassionately, impartially viewed his course towards Flora, and his wandering from her, in his ambition to marry Cora Livingston, he felt that his punishment had been light—for what untold sorrow had he not brought upon her!

He daily received news respecting her health, both physical and mental, and was alternately made sad or happy, as the reports fluctuated. Sometimes they said that she played, laughed, and sung—and then, that she sat moodily alone, and wept, and that her chief desire was to escape and run away from her confinement. How fully Mr. Clarendon now realized the utter worthlessness of wealth, or fame, to bring happiness to his heart; for what could gifts of fortune, or laurels of victory, effect to restore to him his gifted Flora. She was in the enjoyment of delicious fragrance, her ear lulled by music—all that Circe could have devised was presented her as a feast. He had placed her in a flower-wreathed bower, and given her all but liberty. Yet she spurned the whole—she would be free! Her pure spirit would shake off its load, and unencumbered, regain its throne, the seat of reason.

Louis Clarendon felt that he could sacrifice his proud fortune, to its last farthing, to restore her, and bring her back to her clear brilliancy of mind. But time passed on, while he sought, in the pursuit of his daily avocation, and in the enjoyment of Cora's society, for whom he now felt a brother's interest, to drive away his hours of painful suspense.

He pondered much on the remarks dropped by Dr. Vale. What secrets could the dying mother have imparted to him? Was he never to know her history, unless he married her daughter, now a poor, insane girl? How different had been his dreams of a wife? High in station, proud in his consciousness of position and wealth, with the requisite resources to command all that he desired; could he, in thought, even so descend as to seek one unknown, unhonored, and even if restored, uneducated for the world in which he shone conspicuous. He began to realize how much the course he had pursued with her, had tended to make her a recluse—how but for his jealous adoration, she might have imbibed a taste for society, and thought have preyed less upon her mind. The many invitations which he had universally discarded for his lovely ward, now rose up before him, reproaching him for his selfishness, as doing injustice to her, and unfitting her for the station which her education and his guardianship had entitled her. Who, in the wide world, was his query, had she known excepting himself and her governess? Why, he asked himself, had he refused her companionship with her old schoolmates, many of whom she had loved, while alone, her imagination had fed, in her leisure hours, upon the alluring poetry and pernicious fiction which he had furnished her, until the winged hours came, that made her still a prisoner—his own bright captive bird. "Why," he continued, "had he done this, and for what generous motive had he so guarded the child of his adoption? Conscience made its stinging reply, and the selfishness that had governed his course, was to him now fully apparent.

Three months had flown, when Mr. Clarendon received from Dr. Vale a note proclaiming the entire restoration of his patient. The latter informed him, that, for several weeks, she had been rational, and that he had told her that during severe illness, she had been placed under his charge at his own house. He informed him that Flora's inquiries had been numerous, and that for a long time she was anxious about the

absence of Mrs. Linden, but that she had at last submitted passively to her fate, when assured that all was right, and that she might seek her own support on her recovery.

The Doctor informed Mr. Clarendon that his interdiction of books had been a trial to her. That she appeared most cheerful during the long drives with him into the country, that she seemed to remember having seen him as in a dream, and that he had acquired a happy influence over her.

He further communicated to Mr. Clarendon that he had asked her if she had no wish to see her old guardian, and she had expressed so much feeling at the question, that at first he was alarmed ; but he could not have a better test, of her entire restoration than to visit her, though he should enjoin the most perfect quiet and freedom from exciting conversation.

With joy, Mr. Clarendon obeyed the summons. As he approached the cottage, he saw Flora sitting in the doorway. She had just returned from her drive, and was picking over some bunches of grapes.

The Doctor called her within, and said, " A friend is coming to see you. Will you be glad to see him ?"

" Have I any but you ?" she said, plaintively.

" Why, surely, you will be glad to see your guardian," the Doctor replied.

Flora looked up with a reproachful glance, that spoke eloquently the feelings that the remembrance awakened ; but on the instant Mr. Clarendon took her hand with an effort at calmness, and said :

" I am glad to find you better, Flora."

With a kindling blush, she said, " Have the times of Aladdin returned ? Have I found his lamp, and now the wizard that has transported me into this fairy 'palace ?'" The tone was sweet and half playful in which these words were uttered. With delight, the visitor replied :

" Yes, Flora, I am the magician."

A glow again came upon her cheek, while half timidly she looked on the carpet, bewildered.

" Well, how do you like the Doctor's cottage ?" said Mr. Clarendon.

Flora looked up, and with a melancholy smile, replied, " It is beautiful, and he is very kind," but turning upon the Doctor, she said, " but there is no library here." The look was reproachful but pleasant.

"Yet we can enjoy the book of Nature, can we not, Flora?" said the Doctor, "and by and by you shall have the rest."

"How is Sappho?" said Flora, with her eyes still averted.

"He is well, Flora. Shall I bring him here?" replied Mr. Clarendon.

"Dear old dog!" said Flora. "Does he remember me?"

"Oh yes," said Mr. Clarendon, "you must see him, certainly."

Flora, with her old confiding expression, said, "I don't know—my life has many magical scenes, but I try not to be surprised—now that I have seen you, it would not be strange to see old Sappho; but forgive me, Doctor, I feel sometimes as if I ought to go—home."

The physician, seeing her so calm, and so entirely rational, arose and left her with her guardian. As the door closed upon the Doctor, Flora said, while she turned her full eyes upon his face, "You will tell me—you won't deceive me—where am I? Why am I here in this beautiful place, away from Mrs. Linden?"

"You were brought here to be placed under the Doctor's care, Flora, while you were ill. Mrs. Linden has gone away."

"And did she bid me come here and see you?"

"Yes, Flora, she placed you under mine and the Doctor's care."

A look of confiding sweetness played over the features of Flora. With her own irresistible manner, she put her hand in his, who sought it, and said, "I will then trust, as she has trusted me. God never forsakes those who do. But, is this my home?"

"Until we find another that you like better," said Mr. Clarendon cautiously. "Why do you put your hand to your forehead. Does your headache?"

"Oh! no—my hair was in my eyes. You seem anxious—I am quite well, but you are not—you are changed—and look ill."

"Do I? talk to me then, and I shall feel better." Flora looked up at her guardian. He saw that her eyes were clear and full of beaming intelligence.

"Will you tell me," he continued, "the home that you have loved best, since your mother died?"

Sadness came like a pall over her features, while Flora replied, "That home can never be more one to me. When I

am well, I will try to do something to support myself." As Flora ceased speaking, Mr. Clarendon went suddenly from the apartment, and sought Dr. Vale. In deep and earnest conversation they continued engaged for a length of time, when he returned to Flora. She received him with sweet calmness. He assured himself by keen observation, that her mind was restored to its true balance, and that at no period of her life, had she been more rational. He talked with her cheerfully and affectionately; and Flora listened now timidly, and then throwing off her reserve, becoming playful and familiar. Still there was for the most time an avoidance of the eye of her guardian, and if he spoke to her, a color evanesced, and brilliant kindled on her cheek. Her long fringed lashes drooped heavily, and when she looked up, her eyes were melting and lustrous. Her physician anxiously watched her, and saw the intense feeling excited by the presence of her guardian.

After tea he again conversed alone with Mr. Clarendon.

"I have discovered," said he, "in my patient to day, that which forbids your again visiting her—that which must either keep you for ever from her, or will compel you to cherish her for life. I offer to take her to my own home, for her poor mother's sake to guard her, for I doubt your firm resolution to make reparation for the wrong which perhaps you have innocently occasioned her."

"Why do you doubt me, Doctor? I only await your permission to offer her my hand, and tenderly to cherish her as my wife."

"But, Clarendon, this is a sacrifice for you—beautiful, lovely as she is. Supposing her parentage exceptionable, and that when she learns the history of her mother, and the fate of her father—she is by this intelligence again bereft of reason."

"I have thought of every objection to a marriage with Flora, but love has conquered them all. The poor child is very dear to me, and to-night, if I have her consent and yours, I will marry her."

"To-night! Clarendon?"

"Why should I delay, provided she consents?"

"Go to her, then," said the Doctor, "and may God speed you."

Mr. Clarendon found Flora at her piano, and singing. He had not heard her since those delicious hours that he never wearied in recalling. He approached her, and said tenderly,

"Does not this song make you think of the hours in the library—when we loved each other so well?"

Soft and eloquent were her tones in reply. "Those hours, I have long tried to chase from memory. There might have been such in flowery Eden, but God did not will that we all should have a Paradise on earth. When He shut us out, He left us a narrow and a strait path to climb to Heaven. Shall we then mourn if we are denied one here?"

"But it was sin that excluded the first tenants of Eden, and by God's help we will shut the door on our enemy. Would you not go to that home where you were happy once, if it was yours with him you alone loved—as your guardian's wife, bearing his name, and sharing his fate through life?"

The head of Flora sunk in strange bewilderment. Mr. Clarendon feared that he had said too much, and yet he had resolved to take the wandering Flora to his heart, and make her his own, for weal or woe. She did not speak, and he went on,—“We have long loved each other, and you wandered in your angel purity from me, and it was well, for then, I was not worthy of you; but in all the wide world, I have found no one so sweet, so good and lovely as my Flora, no one that I would so soon make my own dear wife. Oh, come then to the heart that adores you—come and tell me, that without delay, we may be united.”

“But—but,” said the breathless girl as she threw herself into the arms of her guardian, “Will you marry me—and not that proud, beautiful lady that you saw abroad?”

“Flora, I fancied her, and now I know why it was—she was much like you.”

“Ah! but she was bred for the world, in which poor Flora would be lost. I am so timid, so afraid of strangers—and then you will be ashamed of me.”

“Do you remember the stimulus of those words to you, dear Flora, to make you study when a child?”

“Oh, yes, but I am too old now, to learn the ways of the world; I am nineteen, and now as much a novice as if a cloister had been my home; but I read about that world in books, and I have no desire to enter it.”

“Then, let me be your world, my darling; you will then be the more to me, if the less to others. You are all I ask—but my wife.”

“And shall I live in your beautiful house, and sit at your

table, and read and sing to you, and fan you when you sleep—and may I love you, and you love me, and will it be all right, and no one else—no beautiful court belle ever take my place? Oh, no, no—this is more than Heaven ordained for me—I am but dreaming”——

Flora's head was on her guardian's shoulder—he checked the low utterance of her words—the lover vowed that ere the moon had risen, she should be his bride.

He left her, and expressed to Dr. Vale his wish that a clergyman should be summoned.

“Is this to be a private ceremony?” said the Doctor.

“It is. Whether the world knows it or not, is to me a matter of indifference; I shall immediately travel with Flora, and leave my friends to enjoy the nine days' wonder.”

“Flora,” said he, returning, “I have sent for a clergyman. Is there any preparation you wish made?”

“This is so sudden!” said the excited girl, “I wish Mrs. Linden was here.”

“Will you ever have as much confidence in me, as you have in her, Flora?”

“She must have inspired a great deal, when she could have ever taken me from you,” said the fond girl, passionately.

“Ah, I owe her much—but she would let me love you now.”

“But, supposing she was to forbid your being mine, and should try to take you from me?”

Flora clung to the shoulder of her guardian, and whispered, “God could only do that; for I am to be your wedded wife.”

“And now, dear one?”

“Let me change my dress—black does not become a bride.”

“Go, go, Flora, but come back soon.”

Flora went to her chamber, and as she sought the bridal robes that in her insane delusion she had made, her nurses and friends screamed in wild alarm for her physician, when low whisperings went on:

“Indulge her,” said the Doctor, enjoying the deception he was practicing on her kind friends, whose tears flowed as they witnessed her calm joy, as she stood to be arrayed for her nuptials.

Around her graceful form floated the dress of airy richness, which Mrs. Linden had ordered made to gratify her wish. With sad feelings her attendants smoothed down its fleecy folds, and on her neck clasped a pearl necklace. She cast a look at the loveliness of her figure, and at the soft white arms

raised above her head in the arrangement of a falling braid, and bade Nelly adjust the long*^gossamer veil, and the wreath of fresh orange buds, which Mr. Clarendon had gathered and twined for her. Low on the soft brow of the queen-like girl, lay the fragrant flowers, and on her bosom a white rose, fresh as though it opened there.

"Are you ready, Flora?" said Dr. Vale, as he came into her room, and tenderly viewed her. The color had now fled from her mellow cheek, and her drooping eyes fell as she came forth on the arm of her physician to meet her destined husband.

Mr. Clarendon rose and met her, and drew her arm within his.

"This is hardly honorable," said the Doctor, "for you to purloin my patient, but I resign her hopefully; and what does Flora say?" he continued.

"She can only trust and hope," said the fond girl.

"May God enable me to *keep the trust*," was the low response. Low and fervently were the responses murmured by each subdued voice, and when the ring encircled the little snowy finger of the bride, her hand for a moment trembled in the bridegroom's clasp. Together they knelt and, after the clergyman, repeated the Lord's Prayer.

The hands of Louis Clarendon and his lovely bride were at last united in that sacred union which proclaimed them in the holy ordinance of matrimony, man and wife.

Thus in the little cottage bower, while the full moon shone down upon the snowy wreathed bride, and lighted her starry eyes with a more holy subdued light, the weary-hearted had found a home on the breast she had so long loved, and the erring, wandering lover peace, in the fulfillment of his vows to the dying mother and her child.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"The bounding, shining, glorious sea!
With ecstasy, I gaze on thee,
And as I gaze, thy billows' roll
Wakes the deep feelings of my soul!"

THE following day Mr. Clarendon inquired of the Doctor, if he considered Flora permanently cured of her malady. "I think," he replied, "that while she is happy, and her mind at rest, there is no danger of a return of her late affliction, but I should fear the effect of much trouble."

"She is now cheerful," replied Mr. Clarendon, "and I will not anticipate a change. Flora will remain here for several days, when we will travel."

"You will now expect the history which I promised to the husband of Flora?"

"No, doctor, I wish to hear or know nothing more. Let darkness shroud the mystery of her mother's life. I mean that her child's shall be one of sunshine and joy. I have chosen her from the world, where, like a hidden flower, she has bloomed. I have separated her from the past, and with the present I am content. You will excuse my brief interview."

Mr. Clarendon parted with the doctor, and sought Flora, whom he found looking out upon the fountain, her face full of tranquil joy. As he approached her, he said, playfully,

"I have afflicting news for you. You are to be resigned into the hands of some French *modistes*, until your apparel is made ready for our journey. This will be a tiresome business, won't it, pet?"

"I know nothing of the important science, but suppose I must be submissive."

"I hope you will be speedily rescued. I think it doubtful if they improve you. I wonder how such a novice will look with all the gilding of fashion's adorning."

"You seem to think I need the experiment," replied Flora, with a half smile.

"The brightest birds do not despise their plumage. My wife will be a conspicuous personage—don't you know this?"

"But when we are in our own dear home," said Flora, winningly, "you will not care what the world thinks, but let me be as free from all restraint and ceremony, as when I was nothing but little Flory."

"May you be always as trustful and loving," said the enamored husband, "and they may dress you like a Quakeress. I have something for your bridal gift." Mr. Clarendon opened a small case, and drew forth some ornaments of pearls.

"My dear guardian! how beautiful! They are gems of the ocean."

"Guardian! You will always be a child, Flora. You are too simple for anything but wild flowers. Those white jessamine stars would look pretty in your jetty tresses; better, I believe, than jewels. I suppose, for custom's sake, we must make ourselves uncomfortable awhile, when we will come home and be domestic. I wish we were there now."

"I have longed to see the ocean, since I crossed it when a child," said Flora, playing with her pearls.

"I am afraid that the beach will be dull for you. Everybody is leaving, or has left."

"But the ocean is still there, and"——

"Your lord and master will be—that's what you meant to say—no affectation, Flora."

"I wish we could go where there was not much company."

"Where you could take up a residence like a soldier-crab on the beach. Well, I like a dash of the foaming brine myself, upon a hot August day, but I cannot stay long on a lonely beach, even with you. I shall be so proud of my young wife, I shall want to exhibit her."

"Oh, I hope not," said the shrinking Flora.

"Do you wish me to keep you a prisoner? For my sake, you will be civil to my friends. Don't fear that you shall be annoyed."

Thus passed away the morning. Mr. Clarendon had been sought for at his office, and Miss Dorothy Benson had marvelled much at his prolonged absence.

"The hour for dining came, and the bridegroom had not yet returned to his city mansion. Little the maiden spinster knew of the affliction in store for her!—that privately she had been dethroned, and that the fair usurper of her long-established dominion, was, ere long, to appear in her young beauty, as mistress of her master's home. Poor Dorothy! thy trials are to come; and sweet novice, Flora—how wilt thou contend with the self-willed and long-indulged housekeeper? Let us see. She is thinking little of such trials now. In the midst of flashing, gorgeous silks, costly laces, and fabrics airy as the wild free grace of her motion, she stands a victim to the goddess Fashion.

Not since she came as a school-girl, to the home where she remained an inmate during her guardian's absence, had Flora cast a thought upon her apparel; but now, to please her husband, her eyes wander over the rich hues of coloring, while she listens with patience to the criticisms of her dress-maker, and stands, she deems, a martyr, to the fitting of her new robes.

That she would "look divinely," as madame says, in the rich, sable folds of velvet displayed; and like something "celestial," in the exquisite Brussels point; and like a "perfect love," in the dark-hued brocade, Flora did not believe. She had been unaccustomed to flattery, and thought she was in the hand of strange, fussy people, and heartily wished that she was released, and left to rational enjoyment. But when a dainty Parisian exhibited to her dazzled eye the wave of zephyr-like feathers, and the glitter of bouquets—clusters of rainbow light, her eyes wandered from the pearly gauze and emerald satin, to the new display. She wondered if these things were real, and if they would dress her in grass and wheat-ears, more green and golden than she had ever seen; if such roses and lilies were essential to a bride's apparel, and if she would look better, in the eyes of her husband, lighted up with glittering stones. They were magically beautiful, she thought, for they made her think of the country, with its bending grass, and bright-hued leaves; but there seemed no fragrance in these flowers, though full of tints that the sunset sky might wear.

Flora looked into the mirror, and saw the diamond light of her eyes, the gleam of her hair, to which the morning sunbeams lent the purple light of a bird's jetty wing, and felt that God

had not made her a doll for the amusement of lookers-on, and she turned away from the parade and show sickened—she had no taste, or heart for it.

But Flora must be pardoned by her fair sisterhood, those radiant belles, who revel in shop glories, whose eyes borrow fresher light from a bouquet of cambric fuschias, beaded with glass rubies, from a garland of emerald-tinted leaves, shining with silver foil, than at the sight of the dewiest lily that ever hid in its mossy covert, or in its broad leaf nested with sweetest fragrance. She must be forgiven for her lack of taste and appreciation of those adornments which add so much to the ball-room beauty, for she had been from a school-girl a recluse, and from a child a rare and singular being. But her husband had now given directions for a costly apparel for his bride, such as corresponded with her position.

So with dresses, and all the tedious discussion, to which she was obliged to listen, and the society of her husband, the time passed, until Flora at last stepped into her own beautiful carriage, and from the pale-pink cottage, to which she had unconsciously been borne in her delirium, she was carried forth a happy, loving bride.

The morning was one of misty splendor. The softest breath of October just lifted the hair from the brow of the young wife, and freshened the red on her coral lip, while the color that kept hiding itself, as her spirit trembled, now spread over her cheek, in a glow of faint crimson, to again pass away, leaving her face almost pale.

As in a font of deep waters, feeling seemed sleeping in her breast, to well up, and gush forth as the under current swelled and heaved with its stirred depths. But to-day, each wavelet was becalmed; serene as a summer lake, her bosom rose and fell, while the peace of an infant's sleep seemed reposing at her heart.

Mr. Clarendon took from his wife's hand a bunch of dripping flowers that she had gathered from under the spray of the fountain, and shaking the rain from its petals, again replaced it in her hands. Throwing from the window those most wet, he said,—

"Did you pick these to remember our first bridal home?"

"Yes," said the new wife; "they seemed to look up lovingly, so I brought them with me. You know that I had no one to bid farewell but my flowers. I ought indeed to love one who

has been so good to the orphan." Flora looked up with a glowing smile.

"Don't say 'ought,'" replied the husband. "Do you not think that had we met but recently, you would have been as much my own?"

"Why, sometimes, I have strange thoughts," said Flora, "as though I had always known you—as if from eternity our souls had been united—as if God had woven our destinies since the stars were made, and that through ages past, and ages to come, we were and would be *one*; that this was to be a part of heaven, only our love would be purified, and that the soul's adoration for its Creator would not be profaned by the mingling of our spirits' communion. Oh! my dearest husband, love seems to me a holy thing! I have dreamed that once, as a little girl, I sat on your knee, and that you kissed my eyes, and told me that they were 'twin stars.'"

"Where was I, Flora, when you remember this?"

"It was in Rome, and some one—it must have been my father—took me away from you, and said that I must not speak to strangers. I could not have been more than four years of age."

"Did you wear a string of coral, and wrought clasps upon your sleeves," said Clarendon, startled.

"I don't know, but I have always carried on my bosom since a child, a little cross of coral that my father cut for me."

"The one that I remarked this morning, Flora?"

"Yes; you laughed at me, and asked me if it was an amulet."

"Show it to me now," said Mr. Clarendon, eagerly.

For the first time, the little cross was examined, when the latter opened his pocket-book, and in a corner of one of its partitions he drew forth one corresponding to it.

"They are alike," said he, wondering.

"Where did you find yours?" said Flora, turning pale, for anything mysterious agitated her.

"Where? I obtained mine when I was in London. I observed its rare workmanship; it hung on the arm of a lady with whom I was conversing—suspended from her bracelet—and seemed out of place. I told her so, and she said that she had a childish attachment for it, but would give it to me; and so I have kept it ever since. And yours is just like it—strange!"

"Why do you keep it?" said Flora.

"Oh! it's a mere whim. I told her I would; but should I ever meet her, I will return it."

"Was she the lady you once told me of?" said Flora—"so proud and beautiful?"

"Yes, my own wife." Flora's eyes were full of trust and happiness.

Louis Clarendon now passionately loved his young bride, and as he met the expression that beamed from her face, he vowed to devote his life to her happiness.

They immediately proceeded to the sea-shore, where their arrival made a sensation among the fashionable acquaintances of the groom who still lingered, though daily threatening to depart, for the season of gaiety had passed, and few were left in the halls where so lately merriment, and music had resounded.

Flora was accordingly introduced into the limited circle, where she appeared an object of mingled curiosity and admiration. Alike conspicuous for her splendid dress and beauty, she drew about her many admirers, anxious for an introduction to the distinguished bride. But the manner of the reserved and shrinking Flora, excited more surprise than the loveliness which attracted. She was entirely natural—and only to those she pleased to address herself was she even civil—but manifested her liking or aversion according as persons pleased or displeased her. At first, she was decidedly opposed to entering the drawing-rooms, and showed some of her old childish willfulness, which had never entirely left her, but her husband had only to look serious and reproachful—when her mood changed, and she was submissive to his wishes.

But when in the circle to which he had drawn her, proud as he was of her fascinations, she constantly alarmed him, by her total avoidance of etiquette, which, though not exhibited in rusticity or *gaucherie* of manner, made him tremble for her impulsive and perverse fancies.

He feared too the wild *abandon* that bewitched the admirers upon whom she smiled; and as by her animation, and musical voice, she drew the rapt attention of her listeners, Mr. Clarendon was bewildered and alarmed.

He rarely left her side in company—he dared not—her tears would start at the proposal. So for the period of a week he devoted himself to her, endeavoring to reconcile himself to her

whims, which grew more varied, as she mingled in scenes of excitement. Alone with his idol, Mr. Clarendon only found freedom from annoyance. Here no fears arose lest his beautiful Flora would start like a fluttering bird, if a stranger approached her, and cling to his arm, with nervous solicitude, or at the sight of a proud, fashionable woman of society, draw herself up with cold hauteur, and turn her head aside, while a curl of contempt wreathed her lip. Neither in solitude was his jealousy excited by the eloquent glances of her eyes, as they fastened themselves upon some object of her fancy. Once upon persuading her to dance, after almost commanding her acquiescence, to confer upon a young friend of his this especial favor, after seeing her waist encircled by the arm of another, and her form gracefully undulating with her partner in the mazes of the waltz, his frame had thrilled with a pang of jealousy—and he had fancied that her reluctance was feigned, or that her partner would not have so urgently solicited her hand in the ensuing dance, and when the request was made, Flora had no time to reply, for suddenly the husband disappeared with his bride.

"Why do you leave so soon?" said Flora. She looked at her husband as she spoke—a strange expression gleamed in his eyes.

"Were you happy in that dance" said Mr. Clarendon as his eyes flashed.

"Yes—the music was good."

"But why didn't you sing to oblige me to night?"

"Oh," said Flora, "that was our dear old library song—no one but you and Sappho must hear that."

"My precious one! then I am only in your heart—the world cannot draw you from me. But you must not exhibit such preferences. Some gentlemen that I present to you, you treat as indifferently as if they were blocks of wood, while others you chat with, and give your flowers to—smile upon,—ah! Flora, are almost familiar with—something as you was when a child. Didn't you ask young Delmont to go on to the piazza, because it was so stupid in the saloon?"

"Yes, but you wouldn't go with me—you were playing chess."

"And when there, didn't he put flowers in your hair?"

"Yes, because you like jessamine flowers. I like Mr. Delmont—but I was so wearied till your game was through—so vexed and tired, that I believe I went to sleep."

"While Mr. Delmont was with you?"

"Yes, he said he would watch for you—he wasn't angry I know, for he called me a sleeping beauty—and said that he hoped I wouldn't go back to the parlor, for that we could hear the sea roar better there."

"Flora, I don't know whether to keep you in society, or out of it."

"But I was so wearied, and you did not come. I would like never to go to the parlors, if you would stay with me, or rove about."

"But I cannot always be with you."

"But you will go to the beach with me, to-morrow, away from these silly people; some of the men look like monkeys, and half of the women seemed so fatigued from morning till night, that I pity them, and wish they were in bed till they become rested. I asked that tall lady, that is called so elegant, 'if she was sleepy,' and she looked surprised; but the look seemed to tire her, and so I walked away, but I heard her whisper to her sister, 'quite a novelty, isn't she?' I knew that she meant me. I didn't care, but I put my arm around the dearest little girl in the world and kissed her. She was so sweet and natural. But she blushed and seemed surprised, too, so I played with my diamond ring. Oh, I am so glad to come away, and I know that you are wearied too."

Mr. Clarendon was half amused and half vexed with the strangely metamorphosed being, for whom happiness and health had done so much. She was now full of joyous mirth, and her laugh musical as her voice in song. Still her wild gaiety was tempered by extreme sensibility, and a look or a word of disapprobation from her husband, would make her smile pensive, and the color flush to her cheek, while she sobered from her bewitching playfulness to such serene repose that, but for the eloquent tenderness that shone in her dark eyes, one might have taken her face for one of Canova's finest works of art.

In the morning Flora stole away by herself to the sea beach, and alone with the ocean, listened to its wild, soothing music, watching it, while it lay

"Calm as an infant, pillowed in its rest,
On a fond mother's bosom, when the sky
Not smother, gave the deep its azure dye,
'Till a new heaven was arched and glassed below."

But there was another mood in which she loved better to watch the sea. She loved its

"Flashing brine, its spray and tempest's roar,
She loved its billowy roll, as on the shore
It dashed its surf in grand sublimity."

Here the feelings of Flora assumed a new character, while in view of God's greatest work; she thought seriously of the sea of life, upon which she had been tumultuously tossed; and how God had conducted her little bark to a blissful haven. In her heart she prayed that she might be thankful, and that her dear husband might never regret that he had chosen her, a poor foreign girl, from all the world, and made her fate so happy. Still she wished that he did not love society so well, but God and nature more. She fervently wished that he was with her now, for the sun was coming up from his kingly bed, and streaming bright rays across the waters, like the quivering of molten gold. The emerald-hued waves, crested with feathery foam, came dashing, slowly but surely, towards her feet, where, on a drifted log, she had sat, watching them.

Fascinated, she played with the silvery waves, while she awaited eagerly the coming of each pile of spray; suddenly the thought of bathing struck her—she believed her husband still asleep, and that she could return ere he was alarmed. The sea had never looked to her so beautiful and inviting. Hastily seeking a hut, she arrayed herself for the sparkling element. Putting on a dress of black, which she girded about the waist with a sash of crimson, she ran over the sands, to enjoy the waters, first placing a cap of black and scarlet upon her head.

Distant ships were sitting, white winged, upon the waves, and smaller craft in fairy beauty floated into port. Gilded with the morning sun, they rode upon the waters, each a thing of life.

Inspiring—delicious to Flora was her early bath; the weather was cool enough to make the ocean seem of pleasant warmth, and her frame to glow and thrill with emotion. Wave after wave came dashing over her, until for a moment she was hid, to arise a Venus from the flood. She first went prudently from the shore—she hoped at times to see her husband coming, but believed he had not missed her, and revelled in the element

she loved. A wave had passed over her and left her standing—another came glittering onward, flashing in the sunbeams, like the light of jewels; unconsciously she leaped forward to feel the dash of waters—she was lifted from her feet—for a moment she struggled to find her footing; like a mermaid or goddess of the sea, she rode the billowy mass, and was left alone with the mighty ocean, a speck upon its surface! The water filled her skirt, and carried her aloft; a wild shriek came across the flood—then a gurgling sound was heard in the dark green depths—a feeling of suffocation as if of rushing, bubbling waters, was all that poor Flora knew, until upon the beach she lay, her head pillowed on her husband's breast. But a moment since, how full of joyous sparkling life—and now, with her long black hair, a dripping mass, thrown backwards, she seemed with her pale chiselled features, corpse-like and haggard!

Her husband had wakened, and, in dismay, discovered the absence of Flora. His fears were at once excited, for he had known her passion for the sea, and since her coming to the beach he had never permitted her to bathe alone. Maddened with his fears, he hastily dressed, and flew on the wings of terror to the shore. Eagerly his eyes peered over the waste of waters; he saw no bathers, but something rose lightly on the coming surf,—then a crimson sash seemed borne aloft. Like the wing of a flamingo it blazed red upon the snowy foam—again with half blinded eyes he gazed—a streaming lock of black hair now caught his vision, and near by floated a cap of black and scarlet. The coming wave dashed over the fear-agonized husband—another, and another, and he grasped the sash. Flora had risen again, and was not insensible. "This way," he screamed, as he breasted the sea towards her. He held the silken tie with death-like grasp, and drew the form it clasped, with sudden desperation towards him. The sash seemed loosened by the effort, and Flora's form receding; it was but an instant, he swam for a moment, and caught the arm of his wife!—she was saved!—and soon lay in a swoon in his arms. He had rescued her from a watery grave, looking now-death like and colorless as herself. Flora opened her eyes and caught the gaze of mingled love and gratitude that beamed upon her face.

"Thank God," was the low exclamation, "I have not lost thee, Flora!" The husband held his rescued wife with an

almost convulsive clasp, and as she attempted to rise, he drew her closer to his bosom, while he murmured,

"Oh, why did you leave me, and go alone to the water?"

Flora was too languid to reply, and by this time assistance from the house had been obtained, by one who came to the beach soon after Mr. Clarendon. She lay for several days ill and languid, but finally recovered, and with her usual animation, chatted with her favorites in the saloon. Her husband urged her immediate departure, but notwithstanding her recent danger, she wished for one more bath in the surf. One beautiful day, she laughingly said to her husband:

"If it had not been for a shark that I saw, I should not have been terrified in the sea; that will not happen again. If you will hold my hand, I can go safely into the water."

"One moment more," said her husband, shuddering, "and my efforts would have been too late. No, Flora—I cannot again consent to your feet touching the spray."

"Ah, but I promise caution—just one dash—one white-capped wave—ah, let me go!"

Flora's entreaties were usually irresistible, but Mr. Clarendon was now firm in his denial. The young wife sighed, when she thought her chief enjoyment was at an end, and as she had known little of late of the exercise of self-denial, or of submission, her feelings rebelled at what she deemed unreasonable restraint.

With sweet earnestness she plead, picturing herself to her husband, securely held by his hand; while again, like a duck she played with the waves. She told him how bravely she could breast the sea, and that her rashness and late danger had taught her prudence for the future; but all in vain, tears and entreaties passed unheeded, and Flora cried with disappointment.

The following day her husband consented that she should take personal leave of her favorite element. The night before their intended departure from the beach, she came with her reluctant husband again to the shore. For a half hour Mr. Clarendon stood with Flora, watching patiently, and with philosophy the place where she had not long since struggled in the billows. His blood turned cold, yet still he stood, looking at the drifted surge. Far out his wife peered again upon the distant sails that sat like swans upon the waters, envying the sea birds that winged across them, and in the bright blue

ether lost themselves, to reappear and dip their wings in the sweet green flood. But the bathers were also by, and she was forbidden to join them.

While with a wistful eye Flora looked upon the diving, plunging party, Mr. Delmont approached, and urged Flora to come out with his party. "There is no danger," said he, "with common discretion; Come, array yourself, Mrs. Clarendon, and with your husband's guidance and mine, you must be safe."

The person who spoke was a gentlemanly, handsome man, with frank, ingenuous manners; he was much fascinated by the artlessness and beauty of the young bride, whose exhibited preference for himself had flattered him.

The eyes of Mr. Clarendon met Flora's look of appeal, and turning almost suddenly away, said,

"No sir, Mrs. Clarendon has had enough of sea-bathing." The manner of the husband was peremptory, and Mr. Delmont walked off with a bow, in another direction.

As Flora looked up, her eyes glistened, which feeling her husband jealously fancied arose more from the wish of joining Mr. Delmont, than for the proposed enjoyment. He had erred. Flora heard his tone of anger, and felt herself in some way aggrieved, and her wishes unreasonably thwarted. Half pettishly, and in a half wounded tone, she murmured:

"I cannot see why you wish to thwart me; we can return in time for you to join the whist party."

Mr. Clarendon had rarely left his wife for amusement, and was now wounded by her remarks. He had felt, since her peril, a shuddering fear of her exposure to the sea, and this solicitude, with some jealousy of her ready accession to the invitation received, now excited his displeasure.

To the remark of Flora he did not reply, and both returned home vexed. Flora went silently to her room,—for the first time since their marriage a cloud came over her happiness.

The husband had left his wife to cry alone. The willfulness of Flora at first mastered her real penitence for her opposition, but she finally sobbed hysterically, and, at last, after long looking for her husband's return laid down like a worn-out child who had grieved itself with sorrow, and hopeless without reconciliation. That her husband had ceased to love her, was the great burden at her heart, while he nursed his vexation, arising from her want of appreciation of his tenderness, and

her wish to accompany the Delmont party into the surf, after he had refused her permission.

For the first time he was angry with his wife, and resolved that she should feel the effects of his displeasure. So much against his own inclination, he remained through the evening in the saloon of the hotel. At the hour of eleven, he went in pursuit of Flora, but to his utter dismay, she had fled, he knew not whither. The night was dark, an easterly storm was brewing. The distant surge, like a low moan, fell on the ear from a distance; but as yet, the sea was calm. Mr. Clarendon had looked out during the evening upon the sky, and observed that although some stars were twinkling, that in the north and east black clouds were gathering like a pall over the heavens.

On finding Flora gone from her room, Mr. Clarendon hastily sought her through the house, on the balconies, and in every spot where he fancied she might have wandered. His next thought was the beach—and yet his mind was agonized at the suspicion that she might have there fled in her excitement, and perhaps again endangered her life. With precipitation he proceeded towards the sea, and to her favorite spot. Terrified, he perceived that the predicted storm was approaching, and that the sea and wind were already thundering together. The night suddenly became dark, and, excepting as the gleam of lightning flashed across his vision, the alarmed husband was enveloped in gloom. The roar of sea, wind, and thunder, continued, deafening any sound that might otherwise be heard in the storm. Rapidly now came down the rain, and with increased violence the waves dashed against the sanded shore. Mr. Clarendon had yet raised no alarm. He was too much terrified to return; and at each dash of the sea, he almost fancied that he saw his lost bride in the darkness, breasting the foam, and once wildly caught at a bundle of seaweed that was washed on to his feet.

Throwing the wet mass aside in despair, he rushed towards the house—he again sought Flora through the rooms—yet he roused no help. He felt that if she was living he could find her. The terrible thought of insanity crossed his mind; and the precaution of her physician agonized his heart. He went to his chamber—he searched it thoroughly—he looked out in the darkness—a broad, flickering glare of lightning flashed in his eyes—the sea was visible for the moment, then all was dark. Suddenly the thunder pealed an awful crash, and died away in a low and distant roll. He looked about his room—the bon-

net of his wife lay where she had thrown it on his entrance, but her shawl was gone. He threw up the window and listened, as if he could hear the music of a voice that might never break on his ears again.

Buttoning on a heavier coat, with his under garments still dripping, he went forth again in the storm, without object or purpose. He only felt that his idol was lost ; that his anger had driven her from him, and that all he could do was to seek her.

The storm was now abating. An hour had passed, and the moon came, cold and pale, through the black clouds that seemed parting for the admission of her silver light.

Mr. Clarendon now sought a couple of sturdy men, and acquainted them with his errand, when again they approached the sea. The wind was now strong, and swept in gusty rage against the night-wanderers.

Again they looked out upon the ocean. The swell was gorgeously sublime. The light of the moon revealed its alternate shades of black and white, as the mountain billows rose and fell, white-capped and silvery. The spray now dashed in the faces of the husband and his companions, but still they searched the sanded shore, until, in despair, they gave up the pursuit. Suddenly, by the light of the moon, in the distance, one of the men thought he discerned, in a fishing hut on the beach, something lying upon the floor. They proceeded towards the spot, where, stretched out upon a hard bench, lay the form of Flora.

The rain had beaten in upon the hut, but she seemed unconscious of the storm, of all but her husband's desertion and anger.

She had awaited him until the hour of ten, ready to confess her error, but he did not come ; another half-hour had passed, and she crept sadly down the staircase, and looked at the company in the saloon. There she saw him with a lady on his arm, gaily conversing, without, she believed, one thought of her ! She cared not where she went, and wandered fearlessly towards the sea. The storm arose—the lightning flashed, and she rushed towards the hut. She dared not come forth in the fearful darkness, so she lay and listened to the roar of the elements. But when the moon came forth she looked out, and wondered if her husband had forgotten her sorrow, and was with the lady yet. Her fears prevailed. She could not go back alone, and

thus they found her, her arms and bosom twined together, and her head upon her breast.

Mr. Clarendon came toward her. "Flora?" said he, "my poor child!" With a wild shriek, and a spring of joy, she clung to his breast.

"How came you here this terrible night?" said her husband, putting her cold cheek to his.

"I don't know," was the trembling answer.

"Come home now, darling—come home and I will never grieve you more."

"Was you with *her* through this dreadful storm?"

"I have been long looking for you; see how wet I am! I have stood on the beach for an hour."

"In the storm! Oh! forgive poor Flora—she has longed to tell you how wrong she was."

"Hush! hush! Come, quickly, where we can obtain dry clothes and warmth."

They soon went forth from the hut, Flora shielded by a large shawl, and as the storm had abated, little inconvenience was felt in returning; and few were happier than Louis Clarendon that gusty night, after his frantic wandering for his hazardous, too sensitive bride.

The following morning Mr. Clarendon left the sea-shore with his wife, and, but for Flora's health, would have proceeded immediately homewards, for he considered travelling a bore, and its annoyances poorly balanced by its pleasures. But to Flora, who had lived a secluded life in the city, all scenes were new, and her enjoyment of the country enthusiastic and natural. So before they returned, they sought the Falls of Niagara, and the bolder scenery of the White Hills—localities which occasioned Mr. Clarendon almost as much anxiety for his romantic wife as on the sea-shore. In all those beautiful objects of nature, Flora longed for the sympathy of Mrs. Linden. All that had saddened her heart, on her going, was the mystery concerning her friend's silence and absence. Her husband had taken no pains to acquaint any one with his marriage excepting Colonel Livingston and Cora, for satisfied as he was with his fascinating, beautiful young bride, he had felt no ambition to make known his nuptials to his friends. Since his anxiety arising from the peculiarities and strange moods of Flora, he had never opposed her wishes, and had been rewarded by her unvarying tranquillity. He had written home, and given

orders for the addition of every adornment to his house against his arrival, leaving his library alone untouched. Mr. Clarendon hoped to please and dazzle the eye of Flora, by beauty and magnificence. But she only longed for a sight of the place, which had been alike to her, one of joy and sorrow. She thought little of its luxuries—her mind was roving to all its dear associations, and soon the time came when she and her husband arrived at the door of their city mansion.

With eager curiosity the servants had awaited the arrival of their master and his new wife, and many were the queries and observations upon the remarkable changes that had transpired in the household. But none did this epoch effect as unpleasantly as Miss Dorothy Benson. But regardless of the maiden-lady's emotions or surmises, the door-bell loudly rung, and hurry and commotion was felt, and seen in and about the large stone mansion that had been for weeks so silent, for the owner and head thereof had returned from his wedding journey, and a new-comer was ushered into the splendid drawing-rooms, that had been muffled in darkness—almost impenetrable gloom—since the last finishing touch had been added to their superb adorning.

It might be that a servant, on stealthy steps, had turned the key, and for one moment glared about a pair of wondering eyes over the rooms, but the ray admitted was soon excluded. How little had poor Benson dreamed, in her excitement, that this dreaded bride was none other than the "little orphan Flora!"

Widely opened the polished doors, while Flora stepped into the parlors, once familiar, but now so changed. Their old-fashioned splendor was left, but over this a magical touch had spread. At first the scene before her was like a vision of fairy land, dimly seen, so heavily the curtains hung over the closed shutters. But soon soft rays of light were admitted, when the imagination of Flora seemed borne to some bright Arabian bower. Her namesake goddess seemed to have woven the carpet on which she trod, so full was it of garden blossoms, and in the crimson-tinted light, bronzes, and valued paintings, stood and hung revealed, all arranged by foreign taste, and with grouping effect.

Bow windows gleaming with the hues of the ruby and amethyst, in which couches of satin were half hid by drapery, and folds of lace, while corresponding recesses, lined with

mirrors, reflected each object of luxurious beauty. The light of the rooms presented different colors. The rich blue one contrasting with the gorgeous crimson of the other. But past these decorations, Flora wandered, regardless of the veiled nuns in Parian marble, who held back in each sculptured hand, folds of transparent lace, while within the enclosure which they parted, stood a couch of white and azure, and before it, a sofa-table inwrought with silver. She saw, but scarcely noticed glittering chandeliers, vases of veined agate, the frost-work of silver, and the richness of ornaments tastefully arranged in fairy-like places, for across the rooms her eye had roved to an old-fashioned sofa, where she had often curled herself when a sorrowing child, and since, sat at the dusk of evening, with her guardian. Once seated, her look was again for a familiar object, and it wandered not in vain. An old-fashioned work-table, and upon it a small work-box, spoke of the olden times, for they had belonged to the mother of her husband ; also, an oval mirror, in which she had looked at her tiny self in a microscopic view, hung forward in the same place.

On each object that spoke of the past, Flora fastened her eye, for her heart, just now, was very busy with remembrances; and when such were scanned, from the parlors she went to the conservatory, where she had spent so many of her early hours. Here, brighter and richer blossoms bloomed than the simple roses and geraniums she had left. The air was redolent with exotics. The tropics had furnished their richest sweets for the greenhouse of the bride. Starry petals mingling with crimson and sapphire-hued cups, hung from the roof, twining in and out of the fragrant vines, and wreathing among the crystal lamps there suspended.

Around her were a forest of shrubs, glossy and green, leaving in soft shadow, the flowers among them. To her own room, the bride passed on. Here, chaste richness prevailed. The chairs and couches were light and tasteful, corresponding with the hangings of delicate blue, that covered the windows. With a bewildered smile, Flora cast her eyes about her, and then, with a yearning unsatisfied gaze, fastened them upon her husband. She had not yet reached her *home*. He anxiously watched her face.

"What is it, Flora?" he said with a smile.

"I dare not ask," she said. "The library—is that, too, changed?"

The doting husband was satisfied. He had anticipated her wishes, and led her down over the broad staircase, and through the spacious hall, lined with paintings of his ancestors, to Flora's old loved sitting-place. Here she had a welcome; with a bound Sappho leaped to the breast of his master, there planting his rough paws, and in his joy, wagging his tail almost in the face of Flora. But her turn for a caress came. Lovingly were his long, silken ears stroked by her delicate fingers; while with boisterous demonstrations the animal testified his remembrance and joy.

"Dear, good old dog!—the dear old place—oh, my guardian"——

"Flora could say no more. Her husband was also silent, and as full of happiness.

"Enough of this," he whispered, "you must shed no more tears—you are at home at last."

Flora now gazed around on each familiar thing. She ran to the large oaken table, and whirled over the papers, and books, and holding in both her little hands those that she and her guardian had read together, and across the carpet of oak and green flew to the shelves, to see her old companions, whose very covers seemed like familiar friends; then in the arm-chair she sat, while she gazed upon the well-remembered pictures, that hung above the mantel-piece in carved frames, whose cracked canvas and dim figures had been the study of her childhood. There, too, was the basket of waxen fruit, hid behind its covering of glass, which had been the work of the elder Mrs. Clarendon, in her youth. Snugly it nestled behind the same green curtain, which had ever to her, given it mysterious value. Here, too, was the old-fashioned harp, on whose strings her fingers had often swept. She did not pass it by without a touch, accompanied by a low gush of melody. She looked out of the large bay window, now thrown up, on the court yard, where a tall elm stood shading the tower, in which the library was built. There, too, hung the old-fashioned lamp, that, for antiquity's sake, was allowed its long-established home, though the introduction of gas had made it useless.

"But you have not seen all yet," said the gratified husband,

"see here, your little rose tree—this could not find its way into the greenhouse ; and here is the page we last turned together the last time you sat upon this sofa."

"No, no, dear husband, not the *last*, one secret I have long kept from you."

"What is it, Flora ?"

"I will tell you—you remember the night you found me by the bed of the poor old woman, and when you tried to win me back, one year ago—but you knew little of the weakness of the heart that loved you—how the next day, I followed you home, and here on this very seat, I waited for your return ; oh, well do I remember the struggles of that hour ; I then cared for naught on earth, or heaven—for only—thee."

"Oh, Flora, why did I not see you ?"

"You did not, but I saw you—your head lay on the parlor sofa, and my Bible over your eyes ; that precious book saved me from a step so wrong—God was near me then."

"May Heaven forgive the sorrow that I have cost you—your little Bible ! I will keep it as a talisman."

"May it bring us both safely home at last," said the wife with serious sweetness, "and oh, may Heaven guard us, in our Paradise ; dearly as I love you, I can never regret the hour I fled. Mrs. Linden was my guardian angel then, and God put it in her heart to warn me"——

"And to bring *my* angel home, in all her purity to bless my life. I forgive her who kept you from me, but I then could not ; she seemed a very serpent."

"I see the hand of God in all this, dearest,—do you not think it is sweet to trust in Heaven ?"

"I cannot enough release my hold on the world to rest on your anchor, Flora."

"But when He has so loved us, it seems easy, to give Him but our hearts. Oh, there have been times when I have been almost in Heaven."

"But sorrow led you there ; life had no temptations for you."

"But the world held my idol, and yet I gave him up for God, and purity. He has rewarded me with happiness on earth ; but I sometimes fear that it is all too much for my weak, impulsive, erring nature ; and that I shall now go backwards, and be drawn into this great world's vortex, and find in

all this splendor and earthly Eden, and in my husband's love, sufficient to root out holier desires."

"Don't fear opposition to your religious devotion, Flora. I love religion in a woman ; it hallows her character in my eyes. In her rectitude, lies her husband's happiness, and his honor rests in her purity of conscience. But all this will yet harmonize with the duties of society ; your sphere will command your presence in the world ; so be as good as you are beautiful, and then I know that I shall have a dutiful as well as a loving wife." Mr. Clarendon smiled, as his last words were jestingly spoken, for he knew that Flora's greatest struggle was to yield, and that through fear of her excitability he had often controlled, and softened his opposition to their different tastes—that the exacting, imperious will, that had governed and swayed all within his influence, since a boy, was only smothered in his tenderness for his bride, and he sometimes trembled lest the current of their lives would not, as now, flow smoothly on. But this was but a transient thought, and passed him like a summer cloud.

Her opposition now so gentle, but gave spirit to their intercourse ; it would be but the sweeter task to mould her to his tastes and wishes. In the library their tea was served the first evening in their home, and before it passed, song had made it rich with melody. The Present had shut out the Past, and the Future was unclouded.

CHAPTER XXVII.

In struggling with misfortune, lies the proof
Of virtue—

SHAKESPEARE.

Let fortune empty all her quiver on me,
I have a soul that like an ample shield
Can take in all, and verge enough for more.

DRYDEN.

IT was a rural and picturesque region which Rufus Wilton selected for the practice of his profession. The portion of it which he chose for a home, was among the undulating ridges of land upon the James' River, in Virginia. Nowhere, on this

side of the Atlantic, were lovelier views presented, or richer wealth of foliage, than in the wild, half-uncultivated spot over which he daily rode in his light vehicle on his medical visits. In the early spring, and during the long summer time, he richly enjoyed his walks and drives about the green valleys and in threading the successive chains of forest hills, so full of woodland music, and soft shadowy brightness. Here lovely lakes slept in embosomed seclusion, around which the laurel bloomed, and thousands of wild flowers nestled in shady nooks, covering the earth with a gay carpet. Near by, the James River glided calmly on, sometimes rolling through chains of hills, and then stealing among valleys of deep quietude.

In a small cottage, he and his mother had located themselves, and with simple fare, and an humble dwelling, the recent heir-apparent to the Livingston estate, once possessed by his father, was now content.

The spot which he had chosen for their home, was in a valley among the hills that bordered the river, not many miles from Richmond. It was a rough structure, built with logs; and consisted of only two rooms, divided by a wide hall, a piazza, rude and unpainted, extending around the dwelling.

A small hut for the servants was in the rear. Over the cottage a high elm waved its branches, sheltering it effectually from the sun, while a beautiful acclivity reared its summit near by, covered with verdure. Rivulets coursed their way down this hill, and falling into a basin, a fitting receptacle for the waters, formed a small lake. This little vale possessed few attractions, excepting to the lover of quiet and seclusion; but after the wandering and sorrowful life of its mistress, it possessed to her the luxury she craved. India matting covered its floors, and furniture of painted wood its richest upholstery. There were many flowers in the yard, but little care had been expended upon them, and they grew rank and wild, even into the walk, which was choked by mosses and trailing vines. Mrs. Linden effected no new arrangements, and her son was too much occupied for any attention to horticulture. Here was his brief resting-place, and scarcely that; for his skill as a physician and surgeon was becoming widely known, and led to a large professional business, which kept him necessarily much from home.

He had started favorably, having made the acquaintance of

a wealthy old Virginian, who had formerly known the Neville family, and had been intimately acquainted with his grandfather. He had been called soon after his removal, to visit the only daughter of the old gentleman, whose situation had been deemed critical, and who recovered her health under his treatment. For his services, he had not only been richly rewarded thereby, but secured the warm friendship of the distinguished friends of his patron.

From this time, he became rapidly prosperous, and through influence and popularity, widely known. The circumstances which had aroused his energies, had been woven into a romantic tale, and were circulated in a region where warm hearts, and sympathizing friends were not wanting to make his path as easy as a young physician's extensive practice would permit.

His visits in families of wealth, brought their rich gains to his purse, and gratitude to his heart for such hospitality and civility as the stranger nowhere more lavishly meets, than among the free-hearted sons of Virginia. He had been as successful as zeal and devotion to his profession could make a young practitioner; yet for all this, his heart often sunk dispirited; and when he returned wearied to his home, the distance that still severed him from Cora looked interminable. His leisure hours were spent in study. He grew pale, and his expression more refined, in the eloquent light that beamed from his thoughtful face, while acquiring the knowledge that added its rich stores to a mind fertile in intellectual resources.

He had been absent a year from his beloved Cora, when by the exercise of his genius, he made a valuable discovery in one of the departments of surgery, which called the attention of the medical faculty to this new light in their hemisphere, giving his name celebrity in the journals of the country, devoted to medicine and physics.

The benefits resulting in consequence, were immediately felt, and his heart beat with satisfaction, when beyond his richest anticipations, he found himself on the road to independence, with sanguine hopes of the accumulation of a fortune.

One evening after a day of toil, he seated himself in his rustic chair, to read letters just received. His mother was beside him, her face beaming with happiness.

One, bearing the superscription of Cora, found its way in a

secure hiding-place, for a private perusal. After reading many on business, he took up another, bearing a foreign post-mark, directed to his mother. She eagerly clasped it, for she knew that it must come from her only brother, in Canton. A long period had intervened since she had heard from him, and, with infinite satisfaction, she read of his intention to return to his native country, and take possession of their paternal home, an estate in Virginia, on which stood "Neville Hall," the old family residence.

Mrs. Linden knew that in this region, the old neglected place must still exist, but in a dilapidated condition. The associations of her childhood were connected with it, and she had avoided the pain that a view would occasion her by hitherto leaving it unsought. But now a handsome remittance had been enclosed for her own benefit, sufficient to cover the expense of repairing the old mansion, and making it a comfortable home, for his and her declining years. He mentioned that his health had been for some time failing, and that his only hope of recovery rested in a return to his native land. He spoke in affectionate tones of his nephew, whom, he said, he should make his heir.

With great pleasure, Rufus Wilton undertook the project set on foot by his uncle ; and sought the old residence of his mother's family, and her birthplace. He understood that it had been left in the hands of tenants, and had been for years neglected, but that it admitted of restoration to its primeval beauty. The following day, with his mother, he sought the old spot, intending to take immediate steps to put it in order, according to his uncle's directions.

Proceeding forthwith to Richmond, he drove about the beautiful eminences in the city ; among which he visited Gamble Hill, and with his mother feasted his eye on the lovely scene here exhibited, where the sweeping waters of its peaceful river were reflected in living beauty—then from the State House they looked down upon the city, sleeping in its picturesque repose below them, and around on the park-like beauty of the grounds of the elegant residences near by, where children and their nurses revel in wild freedom beneath the towering trees that are clumped together over the verdant landscape.

One can hardly say too much of this charming region ; and as here our young favorite commenced his profession, we must

be excused if we have digressed, long enough to add our tribute to its praise.

All over the city and its environs, the son rode with his mother, seeking the residence which, since she left it, as a little child, she had never seen. But "Neville Hall" was nowhere to be found, and many thought that it had been burned years ago, and others remembered that such a place was once offered for sale, with the negroes belonging to its owner, twenty-five years ago; and that the informant had not heard of the place since. But Rufus Wilton was not one to abandon the search; and having ascertained from one of the oldest inhabitants that an old place lay in ruins some ten miles distant, they proceeded in search of it; when, on an eminence overlooking the river, a crumbling house was found buried beneath a forest of trees, which had formerly constituted its park, and beautiful enough for an earl's domains. His inquiries about the neighborhood, respecting the tenants of the old place, were readily answered; and having discovered that a family had settled themselves, free of rent, in the rear of the building, and that "Owl Nest," as the people called it, bore a reputation for ghosts and hobgoblins, he concluded that his ancestral mansion was scarcely worth the pains he had taken to find it. But the romance of the undertaking inspired him—so with the introduction of an old negro, who looked solemn at the idea of an exploration of the spooky chambers of a house, he reconnoitered where only the bats had had access for many years. He "wondered," likewise, in a lugubrious manner, "how Planter Raven could have settled himself in the kitchen, but he had been known," Cuffie said, "to live in a house where there had been three murders, and a graveyard of ghosts, and he reckoned he liked scary places."

Nevertheless, Rufus and his mother proceeded towards the "Hall." Through the dense shade of trees which shut them in from the view without, they wandered for a distance, their hearts scarcely beating, so impressed were they with the gloom that overshadowed them. The walk which they took, proceeded from what evidently had once been a massive iron gate, which had swung high on its hinges, the posts being left in their old stations. The broad avenue had originally wound in a serpentine direction, as was seen from the landmarks that still existed; but now it was irregular and broken with the falling of trees, which had been ruthlessly cut on the premises.

After a long ramble through the deep green park, they suddenly opened to a level spot, which lay on the side of the eminence, where the old "Hall" was visible. Here the son and his mother paused, for already had the latter traced on the bark of old trees, the names of her family ; and the days of her childhood in fancy, had returned, while together, she and her brother, had played beneath the "old elm tree," whose rustic seat in the branches was still left. Like a dream the remembrance came, bewildering but absorbing. While his mother was roving in the park, Rufus went over the place in search of other trees, whose rings told the date of centuries ; and on some of them he traced the names of his maternal ancestors, back to the first settlement of the State.

Then together they proceeded towards the house, whose spacious, antique appearance, with its gable roof and windows, jutting over a wide and extended piazza, startled them with its desolate grandeur. The carvings on the porch entrance were elaborate, and the workmanship of the pillars antique and curious ; on these the owls and bats had built their nests, where swallows darted and ravens croaked about, as they flew in and out of their coverts. The upper windows, over which jutted peaks of crumbling wood, now covered with moss and ivy, were formed of diamond-shaped lights, and swung open in opposite directions, the most of which had been battered and broken. The same shaped windows continued about the house, though with some difference below ; there they were larger and more richly carved. Many of these quaint landmarks gave evidence of English workmanship, brought to adorn this then stupendous castle of the forest.

They went within, and were struck with the dilapidated beauty of the spacious rooms, so long deserted by any human occupant. The shutters showed evidence of having banged against the casements, and sent within the fragments of glass and wood, that lay scattered on a floor made of regular layers of satin wood, now streaked and spotted by the mildew of time. The high mantel-pieces were of carved oak, and corresponded with the cornices, which represented oak leaves and acorns, now so full of dust and cobwebs, that but little of the workmanship was visible.

The broad hall which divided the spacious rooms extended through the house, separating on each side a continuous row of apartments, varying in size, and all equally neglected.

One of the wings had been seemingly used as a chapel, and the one corresponding to it, evidently by its inserted shelves and niches, as a library. The niches were at equal distances apart, and broken pieces of sculpture still stood in them. In one, a figure was complete, all but the top of the skull, in which a bird had built his nest ; and as the child of the mansion stepped into the room where she was born, the shrill croak of a raven met her ear. The black wings of the bird unfolded, after several gyrations around the desolate room, poised on a pillar upon which her head leaned, and after fluttering in evident terror, escaped through one of the broken panes.

Mrs. Linden was not superstitious, but the bird of ill omen had left the hue of his dark wing on her spirit. She turned sorrowfully, and passed through the hall. From this wide opening, a spacious view was presented, of woodland, mountain, and valley. Terrace after terrace, led downwards into mysterious paths, where they now had no time to wander.

The mother and son were satisfied ; they saw that the hand of industry and the magic touch of gold, was all that was needed to restore the beauty of the old family mansion ; and to render it a residence even more attractive than of old. With subdued reverence, she who had been the darling of an aristocratic house, the petted idol and heiress of great wealth, now passed from the hall of her ancestors, with an humble step, feeling the utter worthlessness of family pride, the hollowness of the world's homage, and certainty of change in an ephemeral existence—that knows no abiding-place, until the spirit “shuffles off its mortal coil,” and seeks its eternal home in the mansions of everlasting rest.

Their ride home was pleasant, and Rosa Neville, in her golden days of childhood, or in the rosier ones of riper years, never slept more peaceably in her halls of pride, than in the little log-house in the southern wilderness, where she had learned that true wisdom consists in integrity of purpose ; and the peace of this world, in the subjection of false pride ; in a conscience void of offence, and that “better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.”

For the succeeding year, Rufus, for so we like to call him, devoted much of his time and energy to repairing and making visible the beauty of his ancestral home. Skillful architects were procured to refurbish the rich carvings, and to restore the dusty and cracked ceilings to new lustre and beauty. The

old bird-hatchments were ousted of their tenants, and repainted with a subdued color ; and the diamond-shaped windows made brilliant in their polished casings, with mirrored panes, that comported with the old-fashioned elegance of the mansion. Every oak-leaf and acorn, stood out from the shadow of its burnished foundation, while the panelling below was restored, as if by magic, to its old richness of coloring. The walls were painted as nearly their original color, as patches existing of it could be distinguished, bringing out their ashen hue more delicate and light, perhaps, than of old. The broad oaken stair-case only needed the hand of skill ; and the library came forth with a resurrection of its comfortable antiquity, in a state of primeval richness, with the exception of the sculptured divinities, models of which were sent abroad for imitation. The ravens no longer knew their home, nor the swallows their nests—the owls hooted in vain for their gloomy lodgments, and where the cobweb-dust of years had rested, old-fashioned drapery now hung in heavy folds. Over the windows, roses wreathed their young buds, instead of the tendrils of the poisoned ivy and cypress, once telling of desolation and death.

From hidden places the son of the Nevilles drew forth dusty worm-eaten canvass, which the hand of the regenerator revived, showing original portraits of the family owners, who had long since slept in their graves. Each piece of furniture, window, or casement, which told of the "olden time" of America, or derived its value from its importation from the old world, was retained in its original state ; while out of the ashes of antiquity arose the new and beautiful.

Oaken chairs, and rustic willow-seats, which had here found their home for generations, were retained, though in a state of half preservation ; and over the exterior was cast a hue of sombre richness.

The mansion completed, Rufus turned his attention to the grounds, more grand, gloomy, and imposing, in their noble forest trees, than attractive with tasteful culture. The hand of nature had been for many years the chief cultivator of the extensive park, where deer roved in uncontrolled freedom, so quiet and dense was the shade. Rufus Wilton had an inherent passion for the gloomy and the grand in scenery, and would not have cut away one limb of a noble oak, or a branch of the lordly graceful elm, for anything but the total exclusion of Heaven's sunlight from the windows of the mansion.

He left the noble forest archway, which formed its own Gothic roof, untouched ; it seemed to him like a "fretted aisle in the dim woods," where the choristers of Heaven sung their bird chants ; and like sacrilege to disturb them, or their homes. But he brought roses and rare flowers from all climes to adorn the columns and bower-like places.

One spot, quite remote from the house, a wild ravine, he had sought out, where he found strange natural beauties.

Here, where the lofty hemlock showed his crown, as king of the forest, and the pine rose clear on the sky—among thickets of blossoming laurel, and the spreading leaves of the beech and live oak, a succession of cascades fell from the sides of a green mountain, as if by some magic power—so full of wild beauty, and fairy-like effect, it passed into an amber rivulet below.

As far as possible, all this natural beauty was left in its wild state, though the hand of the artist and cultivator was seen in the clearing of the underbrush, and on the green velvety carpet where no stick or stone offended the eye, until in terrace after terrace, it reached the bank of the rivulet. Here, within sight of the gushing water-falls, within sound of their soothing melody, he built an arbor, which he covered with flowering vines and roses. The white petals of the Le Marque rose, mingled with those of the multiflora ; and at the base of the fairy temple, the "cloth of gold," and the rich petals of the cape jessamine, opened to the morning sun their buds and glittering blossoms. *Jets d'eau* also threw up their fresh, sparkling dew ; and artificial lakes, with gold and silver fish, lay hedged in by mossy hills ; but far prettier to Rufus were the little silvery streams, where beautiful trout sportively had lived, without fear of the angler. Here, natural rivulets were allowed their play, and not a deer was permitted to be shot, that coursed in freedom from rock to woodland. At length, the chief of his work was done, and he impatiently awaited the arrival of its liberal and wealthy owner.

For himself, his little log cottage contained all that was now valuable to him in Virginia—his dear mother and his books. Each day that he lived, the ambition arose in his heart to fit himself for a sphere of usefulness, that should bring its own reward ; and earn him, if not in the eyes of the world, in the still depths of an approving conscience, the character to which he aspired. But he needed sympathy to aid him onward, and

his spirit hourly roved to her, who was his day-star of hope. Warm-hearted friends entertained him in their hospitable homes, and in the sunshine of society he often tried to cheer away the period of his probation ; but at times his yearning heart refused to be comforted. He had heard that a throng of suitors were at the feet of his beloved Cora, and knew that her father's increased pride and growing ambition for his daughter, placed her still further beyond his reach. But he firmly resolved that when he felt his position such, that he could offer her a home with confidence, and without humiliation, that a parent's false pride should no longer prevent his seeking her for his wife. And that hour had come, though the modesty of his character still made him feel that the name his father had disgraced was yet unredeemed. His first object was to pay yearly a sum to the estate of which he had spent a part, though innocently ; and he hoped, in time, to liquidate the debt. His genius had already won him the laurels awarded to the contributor to science—his industry and fidelity to his profession, confidence and respect, and his honorable deportment, the character of the entire gentleman.

In the meanwhile, Cora went on with her usual life at the now gaily thronged "Park," where visitors swarmed during the summer months, and as late in the season as they found the air of the country useful, and the agreeable company there assembled, inspiring and gay. With all, Cora was a favorite. Her freedom from assumption forbade emotions of jealousy ; and one could scarcely envy her wealth and position, she seemed to regard herself of so little value—excepting as affording her the means to give happiness to others. The indifference shown to her many suitors, excited much surprise ; for no one saw any evidence of deep regret for the one from whom she was deemed separated. Her sanguine temperament was kept buoyant by hope, and fed weekly by the long letters received from her absent lover. She rarely mentioned him, excepting to old Goody, to whom she read parts of his epistles ; and whom she made her confidant, and the partaker of her joys, and anxieties. The flowers that she and Rufus had gathered together, were always recognized in their old familiar haunts, and their perfume came breathing from every fond sheet that she penned to Virginia.

The marriage of Mr. Clarendon had surprised her much ; and she longed for an acquaintance with his bride, of whom

she had heard such equivocal reports. Some pronounced her bewitchingly lovely, with a slight foreign accent, that added an irresistible charm to her voice, with manners piquant, and interesting; while others denounced her as wild, impulsive, and uncultivated; but all acknowledged her surpassingly beautiful.

Cora had no idea whom he had wedded, having simply learned by a rumor of his private marriage to a foreigner, and of his wedding tour with his bride.

But not long after their return, a note was received from Mr. Clarendon, with an invitation for herself and her father to visit them, while he apologized for omitting the usual ceremonies on such occasions, in consequence of the delicate health of his wife. The actual truth, as the reader may imagine, lay in Flora's aversion to form and etiquette.

Accordingly, a fortnight after the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Clarendon at their residence, Cora and her father proceeded to New York, to pay their respects to the bride.

Flora and her husband sat in one of the drawing-rooms at the time, awaiting a summons to dinner. But as it yet lacked a half hour of the period, they retired to one of the recesses, and amused themselves by the attractions and curiosities there arranged. Flora was airily dressed—a costume unusual with her, while over her neck and shoulders a scarf of lace was gathered, and crossed on her bosom. Her arms were undraped, and adorned with ornaments of coral. Her hair was wound in ample folds, loosely about her head, falling low upon her neck, without decoration.

She had not heard the announcement of visitors, and as Cora and her father entered the opposite room, which was heavily curtained, her person and attitude were fully revealed.

One arm and hand rested on her husband, while she watched his admiration of a scene to which she asked his attention.

Cora was fascinated as with a picture, and as she came forward with her father towards the dark-haired bride, her own fairy-like beauty, with its golden locks and blue eyes, afforded the contrast of starry night, to Eden's sunniest morning.

The Colonel was stately and elegant, and in his blandest manner approached Mr. Clarendon, who came forward to greet his friends. Then turning, he presented them to Mrs. Clarendon.

The latter turned her eyes languidly, indifferently upon her guests, as the Colonel addressed her. But at the first glance

she had disliked him, and if a statue could be supposed to give a superb bend of the head, and quietly sink back into its cold repose, so Flora met the salutations of Colonel Livingston ; then, with scarce a movement of her eyes, she was attracted by the appearance of Cora, and at once came towards her. With both her hands she clasped the gloved fingers presented, and while the radiance of delight overspread her face, said, " I am glad to see you."

The tone in which she spoke was so natural and genuine, that Cora, from sympathy, exchanged the greeting as cordially. Mr. Clarendon was so much chagrined with his wife's reception of the Colonel, that he scarcely observed her address to Cora, but devoted himself to his old friend.

In the meantime, Flora sat looking into Cora's eyes, scarcely replying to her questions relative to her journey, but after seeming awhile to listen, said earnestly :

" Why did you not come and see me before ? I know that I shall love you—I did not see you at first, you floated in like a spirit."

" Because you were occupied," replied Cora, smiling. " I saw you from the parlor, with your husband."

" You have known him before—I saw that—pray where, Miss Livingston ?"

" Oh, yes, he was an old friend of papa's."

Flora looked up at the Colonel very much as she would to a Gothic ruin, impressing her with solemn grandeur. Then dropping her eyes, she seemed absorbed, while she observed Cora's pretty foot ; when she raised them they encountered her husband's, who directly understood that she wished him to come near her. But he was anxious for an acquaintance to ripen between his wife and Cora, knowing that society only would accustom her to its forms ; so he left her to entertain a stranger, for the first time, alone.

But Cora was no bugbear to the timid Flora, although at first, she did little but feast her eyes on her delicate beauty as composedly as if she was looking at a rare flower ; still her sympathy and admiration had been awakened, and, like a child, she wanted to evince her love undisguisedly.

Cora was fascinated with the artlessness of Flora, and though, in another, she would have been more amazed than gratified at such impulsive manners, she felt that the warblings of a forest bird would as soon offend her, as the guileless droppings from

Flora's lips, although she would not have advised their imitation.

At Flora's invitation, Cora followed her from room to room, being carried like a child over her house, where she seemed no more its mistress than her nightingale.

"I forgot," said she, after leaving the parlors, "that I did not offer you some cake and wine—if you will come into my sitting room, I will break a cocoa-nut—and we will drink the milk together, and then Sappho can have some too—or perhaps you will like to see the library—I used to sit there when I was a child."

"Indeed!" said Cora, looking at the brilliant color that flushed Flora's usually pale cheek, "when a child?"

"Why, did you not know that my husband adopted me when I was a little girl?"

"Pardon me, you are a stranger to me, and I was ignorant of this, but no one more fully rejoices in his happiness than I do."

Flora wondered if any one had ever loved Cora as well. But the next moment she thought of the cocoa-nut and the library, to which she hastened, and then rung for her feast. She then persuaded her visitor to sit down by the open door, with her, when gathering the big head of Sappho in her lap, she winningly, and freely conversed with her companion.

The servant came with the broken nut, when she insisted upon Cora's partaking of it with her, while she occasionally gave the dog a piece. She readily entered into a familiar conversation with Cora, who saw, notwithstanding Flora's eccentricities, that she possessed character and feeling, with a mind that soared beyond the vanities of life; and that beneath her childish manner, the under current of thought was fresh and deep.

This she drew, also, from the searching gaze of her spiritual eyes, the enthusiasm with which she spoke of her favorite authors, and the intelligence with which she discussed the subjects on which they treated; still, to the casual observer, Flora, appeared often wild, reckless, and totally regardless of all, but her own whims—yet one who scanned her closely would find that her actions were biased by nice discrimination, and an intuitive sense of the good and intellectual, while she scorned the pomposity of the arrogant and assuming, and felt supreme contempt for the mere devotee to fashion. Still, had she been

bred in the observance of strict etiquette, her preferences would not have been so openly exhibited ; in her own mind, she would have judged, without openly manifesting her tastes.

She turned without apology from the face that bore a contracted and sinister expression, to the frank and open-hearted, as the flower shuts its leaves at the approach of a poisonous insect, and opens them to the sunshine of Heaven.

Thus, this child of nature won her favorites, while she made enemies in the circle where her husband had been so popular.

We do not hold her up as an example for imitation, but as a human being, with an instinctive sense of the good and beautiful, without that education and training, that would have better taught her to overlook folly and vain pride, with more charity, while, by her own example, she showed herself superior to those, she might justly condemn. The bent of Cora's mind was different—to all, she exhibited her own natural sweetness of temper. The person that she despised, was never wounded by her severity or coldness, for she never forgot that "to err is human, to forgive divine." And no one left her society without feeling emulated to higher aims, by the nobleness and simplicity that shone forth in her face and character.

But Flora and Cora were differently constituted by nature. To the former a life of piety and virtue had been like the hill of difficulty to Bunyan's Christian. She had fierce struggles with her own heart, before she could turn her back upon error, and press forward to good ; her stormy passions had been like an army of antagonists, to conquer, and now, with all her firm resolutions, with the victory which she once obtained over self, with her humble trust in Divine aid, still there were times when uncontrolled emotions overwhelmed her with their powerful sway. Neither was charity her sweetest grace—while it spread like a mantle over the character of Cora. It was far easier for the latter to be good. She was naturally lovely and serene as the breath of summer, and like the falling of gentle dews, her spirit rained down its sweet influences.

When Mr. Clarendon and the Colonel found the ladies, they were in earnest conversation, and had already made rapid advance towards friendship. Flora's lack of ceremony with the Colonel and Cora, had somewhat mortified her husband ; but when he found that in addition to rudeness to his old friend, she had ran away with his daughter for the sake of

"child's play," as he deemed the repast, so unceremoniously gotten up and partaken of, he was more vexed than amused.

"Flora, what is all this?" said he. "Miss Cora," he continued, forcing a smile, "you must not tell how my wife receives her bridal calls, and how she entertains her visitors, and in what company," he added, pointing to the dog that Flora was feeding with the nut.

"Just eat some with us, Gardy, and our sin will be forgiven. I knew, as soon as I looked at your friend," said Flora, with her eyes on Cora, "that she would like, as well as myself, a little freedom. We never should have become acquainted playing etiquette."

"I suppose, Mrs. Clarendon," said the Colonel, with courtesy, "that you have become quite wearied with ceremony, since your marriage, so much is involved on such occasions."

"I never allow, sir," said Flora, "occasions to rule me, when nothing more important is involved, than ceremony."

"But you will not deny, Flora," said her husband, "that trifles make up the sum of one's happiness; so when you divest life of its ceremonies, you subtract much of its life-giving principle. You might as well take the laws from the State, as from society its code of etiquette."

"Perhaps," said the Colonel, "Mrs. Clarendon thinks that there is too much instability in the goddess queen to make a consistent code."

"Indisputable, if not consistent," said Mr. Clarendon, looking at his wife.

"I submit to no laws but those of reason and right," replied Flora.

"What do you hear from Virginia?" questioned Mr. Clarendon, turning the subject.

"My news is all good, Mr. Clarendon."

Flora looked up inquiringly, but her glance was only met by significant looks between her husband and Cora. The intelligence manifested, brought the former to the side of his once fair enslaver, while he said, "Miss Cora, I believe this is your first visit to my house," but for some reason that overpowered him, as he witnessed the elegance of her bearing, in contrast with the wild freedom of his wife, he did not immediately finish his sentence, but thought of his former ambition,

and pursuit of one who so strongly contrasted with her whom he had wedded. He wondered if her influence and example would correct the defect, so palpable to him in his wife's demeanor, the only one that he saw in his petted Flora. How perfect, he thought, she would become with the manners of Cora, and her instinctive sense of propriety. "I believe I did not finish my remark," he concluded, "that this was your first visit to us, but that I hope we may persuade you to spend a few weeks with us this coming winter." Mr. Clarendon looked towards Flora for her response, but, for the first time, she seemed absent in mind, while he met a look, which said plainly, "Have I wearied you?" He trembled lest corresponding words would follow, but Flora was only silent; she lost suddenly her gaiety, and sat without speaking, until Cora rose to go—then in a low tone, as she again took Cora's hand, said,

"I hope you will come again to see me—I love you—but if you were always with me, my husband might love you too." The natural sweetness with which these words were uttered, much impressed Cora; and she could not help fearing when she met the earnest eyes of the young loving wife, that her happiness was critically situated, with her hitherto gallant husband.

Still habit could not resist the characteristic reply from Mr. Clarendon, and when she bade the latter adieu, he said, in an under tone, "It is not strange that my wife has her fears, such a visit might be dangerous."

Flora was now bowing off the Colonel, and Cora had time to answer.

"The shield of truth and love protects you. It is a good one, and I know that you appreciate it. I am glad to see you so happy. You have found a treasure."

"Then you will often come to see us? Wilton won't be jealous now."

"No, he is doubly protected," said Cora, half vexed, but the frank rejoinder dissipated the feeling.

"That is true, Miss Cora, and I only wish you both the same amount of happiness that you leave here."

Cora appreciated the honest sentiment that came at last, and forgave the unwelcome gallantry. By this time, the Colonel had frozen stiff with Flora's dignity, which half pleased, and half amazed him, for he had but just recovered from the shock received from her sudden retreat with his daughter

from his presence ; on the whole, he much preferred her stateliness—he thought it admirably comported with her style of beauty.

Accordingly, he left her with many courtly professions, and “hoped that she and Mr. Clarendon would soon honor them with a visit at the Park,” to which invitation Flora gave another statue bend, and looked up to see if the Gothic window had closed. Flora might have been more courteous, but she thought that Cora and her husband had been certainly an hour making parting compliments, and without waiting for the conclusion of the Colonel’s final speech, turned towards Cora, who met her with a smile that dissipated her discomfiture.

Mr. Clarendon accompanied Cora to the carriage, the Colonel following, which arrangement seemed to Flora unnecessary. But the vehicle soon rolled away, when the husband, with a tap on the shoulder of his wife, asked her, “If it was not late, and time for dinner?”

“I don’t know,” said Flora, demurely, “that rests upon Benson. Miss Dorothy and I don’t have much communion. She is so tall and grim, I am afraid of her.”

“But you are not short, Daisy, if you are not so grim—not quite to my shoulder though. Why do you look so solemn, are you hungry or vexed?”

“Both.”

“Well then, we’ll have a game of chess before dinner.”

Mr. Clarendon had spared no effort since his return, to make his home attractive. Flora’s ingenuousness and simplicity of character, that excited so much remark from those who had laid their snares for the rich bachelor, amused and inspired him. Her moods were so varied, that he was kept in excitement always to understand them, which relieved their intercourse from the tameness that might have ensued from a more equable match. He had but one serious annoyance to mar his happiness, and that he hoped in time to subdue. Much as he was amused by the novelty and freshness of Flora in private life, in public he wished her *au fait* in the world’s estimation. But Flora gave little heed to his hints for improvement; but she had, with all her happiness, one new and peculiar trial. Miss Dorothy Benson valiantly disputed the reign of her young mistress. She was a tall, raw-boned woman, of the age of fifty, scrupulously nice and systematic; and violently opposed to any innovations on her old mode of housekeeping. “Her

ways," she said, "had always suited her old mistress, and Mister Louis too, and she thought it would be a pretty how to do, if she couldn't regulate matters without a new one, that had always set the house topsyturvy, since she came into it. But it was no more than she expected, such a spiled child as she always was. And didn't she, to be sure, as soon as she come from towering on't, go to letten the sun and breezes into the blue parlor, fit for a princess, instead of a singin forriner, born nobody knew how, or where; the same room that old mistress kept to nap in, though, the Lord knew! she wouldn't know it now—such a baby-house as it was. And what was worse than all, the old dimity curtains must come down from her old mistress' bed-room, to be turned into a silver cage for the new canary, that did nothing but sing and plume herself; then, too, she must take her seat in the old library, and fling about the books, and open the blinds, and loll on the sofas, and poke over flowers. How Mister Louis could abide it all, she couldn't see, for there hadn't been a bit of quiet in the house since she came in it; she thought when she run away, that was the end of her; but lo! and behold! all to once, she came as grand as a queen back, and Mister Louis' wife; and such a time as had been made for her! Lord! she thought he'd married a court-lady! To be sure, she was pretty enough, but so witches was pretty too, and she was sure, she'd witched Mister Louis, then too," Miss Dorothy continued to the cook, "just as if she knew anything about ordering things up or down. She had hoped, if Mister Louis ever married at all, which she saw no use in, that it would have been to some one that could respect a woman of her standing; but I expect I shall be ordered to shift dinner-hours next, so that the young lady can have things her own way." So Miss Benson daily raved to the cook, behind cupboard doors, and in out-of-the-way places, while her young mistress' whims became no fewer for the old house-keeper's complaints.

Flora, from education and indulgence, was exacting in little matters, which she considered that she had a right to control, though as yet she had been too happy to lose her sweetness of temper, with any show of opposition.

Still Miss Dorothy annoyed Flora with the quiet, decisive way that she ruled the house, regardless of her directions, because "that was the way things had been managed for more than twenty years." Flora was also in an undeclared war

about her flowers. After having arranged from the conservatory, the choicest flowers about her rooms, she would often find them missing, when she had left them fresh and beautiful, without having seen the energetic fling which propelled them across the street, while she anathematized "Miss Clarendon's litters, making the house like a garret of yarbs, while all she could do was to clean—clean;" then to Timothy, the waiter, she had her outspit. "There used to be," she said, "a gentle smell of tobacco, mornings, in the house, but now 'twas full of posy smells—then there was the peaner always 'stretched—and master a tuting on the fleute, to please his pretty gipsey—she hoped, she might be transplanted, fore anything smaller come to muss up the house—she was sure 'twas bad enough now," so Miss Benson continued to rave in a prudent tone, while "setting the rooms to rights," occasionally thrusting her head into the hall, and up the stair-case, to see if anybody was coming—though she knew that it would be full three hours before the "silver cage" was opened. But when her young mistress finally showed herself below, Benson was always seen retreating, her eyes peering up to the ceiling with a "searching cobwebs" air, a look corresponding with the expression her turned up nose evinced, for the threatened new measures which slowly, but surely, foretold the conclusion of her reign.

Mr. Clarendon was aware to some extent of the disagreeable ways and domineering rule of Miss Dorothy, but having been so long accustomed to them, and knowing her valuable services, he did not consider the fact, that his young-wife's tastes might seriously conflict with the old established rules, that had, for more than thirty years, regulated the household, and was rather more amused than annoyed by Flora's vexations, which she took no pains to conceal, but in extravagant terms, pronounced Benson a "perfect savage." He had often watched the contests between his half imperious wife, and her defiant housekeeper, but while the clashing related to flowers, the arrangement of the dinner table, the opening, or shutting of lattices, or the admission, or out-turning of Sappho—he did not interfere. But now a matter had come up between them, that more affected his own convenience—and though he might put Flora sometimes in a pet, himself, he began to think that he could not permit another daily to do so. And when he returned home, he liked not to find her face clouded by any petty annoyance.

After Cora and her father had left, and the game commenced, Mr. Clarendon said :

"I thought we were to have dinner at five instead of six."

"That is just as Benson pleases," said Flora, slightly pouting.

"But did you tell her that you wished the dinner hour changed?" Mr. Clarendon felt the reproach somewhat cast upon himself, and although he knew of Benson's underhanded dominion, he did not like to acknowledge her supremacy.

"I did," said Flora, playing with the chessmen.

"I have been home an hour—there is no excuse for the delay."

"Company has made it seem a shorter period—hasn't it?" queried Flora too good naturedly for her husband's present humor.

"You are cool about the matter, Flora—and do not seem disturbed by the annoyance occasioned me."

"I couldn't get the dinner myself," answered the wife—playfully, not sorry that her husband had become angry with Benson.

But Mr. Clarendon was not alone vexed with the latter, he was excited by Flora's indifference. The game half played, he unceremoniously wound it up, by brushing the men off the board, while he rose, and rung the bell with violence. It was instantly answered.

"Timothy, why is not dinner ready?" again demanded Mr. Clarendon sternly.

"It is not yet six, sir."

"But your mistress directed the hour changed."

"Miss Benson gave no such orders to the cook."

"You can go, Timothy. Flora, cannot these domestic matters be remedied somewhat? I am positively angry."

"I thought so," replied Flora, tapping her foot on the carpet, "but it requires something more than a display of"—

"Temper—eh?—well perhaps it does—what would you advise, Minerva?"

"I would like to have you decide who is mistress in this house."

"What do you mean, Flora? This is very vexatious—matters between you and Benson—her whims are not easily changed."

"Nor to be disputed."

"Why do you say this?—you know that you have sole authority in this house—you annoy me,—positively Flora."

"I do not mean to," said Flora, her voice half choked, and her lip compressed—"but—I have been tried, too. I will not be so longer."

Flora looked up with wounded feeling, portrayed in her manner and words.

"I do not understand you," said Mr. Clarendon, softened.

"I mean that your comfort shall not be marred by indecision on my part longer. I will dismiss Benson, or she shall obey me."

"Flora—foolish child—we could not do without her—why, she was my mother's main dependence."

"I have heard enough of this from Benson, pray don't repeat it. I believe that I am now Mrs. Clarendon."

"But, Flora," replied Mr. Clarendon, startled, "we cannot dismiss Benson."

"There is but one alternative."

"*Vive la reine!*—On! Stanly, on!—to the battle, without delay! You are assuming a new character, and quite inspire me to follow my fair general."

"Laugh at me, if you will, I have borne enough—but you must sustain me."

"All I can say is, God speed you—it is what I could never attempt—rule Benson! She is an ogress—that's a fact—and you have been tried with her domestic tyranny. But remember, Flora, that she is as faithful as an old cross dog, and would serve us till death. I should not dare actually to confront her—wait awhile"—

"I am not afraid of doing what is right; while you were satisfied with her course, I was uncomplaining. I could suffer alone, but my husband shall not be made uncomfortable by my fault."

"But you are not responsible, my darling, for Benson's arbitrary ways."

"I am; I have not taught her my own position. She looks upon me as the child I came to you."

"And you are not? you would have us all believe."

"Yes—still too much of one." The excited girl, for a moment, buried her head and tearful eyes on the shoulder of her husband. A kiss, that told of reconciliation and restored good humor, met her lips; and when the announcement for

dinner came, her brow was unruffled, and her eyes without a shadow.

The dinner passed off gaily. Flora was in high spirits, and called her wits into play, to amuse her husband. She rallied him on his long interview with Cora, and expressed her disaffection for the Colonel, whom she called stiff and proud.

"What were you talking of so long with him?" said Mr. Clarendon.

"About 'coats of arms,' and he asked me what was that of my family."

"What did you reply?" questioned Mr. Clarendon, hastily.

"I told him that I had never paid any attention to heraldry—that I was too good a republican to waste my thoughts upon such remnants of British pride."

"Oh, Flora, why didn't you humor his predilection for such things. You must learn to harmonize your views, to at least a civil degree with others."

"Then, of course, I must ignore my own opinions, and side with those of others. I hate pride, hypocrisy, and toadyism. But here is our dessert."

"And a glass of wine for you."

"Your toast? I join you in a purer beverage."

"Success to your victory over Benson."

"Hush!" whispered Flora, taking the glass from her lips, "she is coming. I will speak to her now, while you are here."

Mr. Clarendon resorted to a newspaper, whether to conceal a smile, or his fears he did not say. Miss Dorothy came into the dining-room, with a manner consistent with her late rebellion, without any apparent object, but to show her defiance of ceremony.

"I wish to speak to you," said Flora, addressing her. "I find that there are no flowers in the vases that I filled this morning—why is this?"

"It's new times to have litters round—didn't 'spose Mr. Louis liked 'em. He never used to."

Miss Dorothy now peered her eyes up to the ceiling, and drew down the corners of her mouth, while her nostrils expanded, and spoke plainly as ever—defiance.

"You have a new mistress, as well as new times," said Flora, looking at the red curtain opposite.

Mr. Clarendon laid down his paper—glanced at his wife, and then at Miss Dorothy. The contrast in Flora's girlish

beauty, with the masculine rigidity of her combatant, fixed his attention. A deeper color had arisen on Flora's cheek, while he perceived the agitation she so well concealed.

Miss Dorothy planted her knuckles in her ribs more impressively, and finally spoke.

"I've lived here goin' on forty year, and I've had older mistresses in my time."

"Your replies are not to the purpose, and impertinent," said Flora, impressively, while she looked full into the green eyes, fastened on her young face. "I wish to tell you that I have permitted the last disobedience to my requirements from you, and that I shall, for the future, expect entire submission to my orders."

With hands and eyes exalted, ceiling high, Miss Dorothy exclaimed,

"And it's a person of my respectability that's to be ordered about, like an Irish of a potato digging"——

"Benson!" thundered Mr. Clarendon in a voice that silenced the rebellious Dorothy.

"Few words are necessary," interposed Flora, "you must leave my service or strictly obey me; remember—that to-morrow, and hereafter, until I change the hour, I shall expect dinner at five o'clock. You can now go."

Dorothy turned white, and then yellow, while her eyes flashed all the shades of a beer-bottle in the sun. She gave an appealing look at Mr. Clarendon, as to higher authority, but here she found no favor, but rather a stern judge, and in the words that closed the conference, she read her verdict.

"You can leave now, and hereafter obey the orders of your mistress."

The knuckles came out of the maiden spinster's sides, her variegated eyes out of the fluted ceiling; though vanquished, she retreated majestically.

A low chuckle from Timothy was heard outside of the door, who soon came in with a dying grin on his face, to put away the silver.

After the door had closed upon the waiter, Flora and her husband proceeded to the library, the latter much pleased with his wife's decision, and the position she had taken with the servants; while Flora threw aside her dignity, and on the knee of her husband, teased and amused him, and endeavored to keep him at home through the evening.

"No, no," persisted the admiring husband; "not too many victories in one day. I am positively afraid of you—such a blow to the state as we have had!—Adieu, don't sit up for me."

The next moment Flora was looking from the window, with Sappho's paws on the casement, wondering if any one in the wide world was as happy as herself. Benson's lecture was reported through the house by Timothy, who had enjoyed it, and although with the servants, the dictator exhibited her power with her usual imperiousness, yet in the presence of her young mistress, she wore an ambiguous look, that betokened something between real and mock submission. Flora feared that the usurper was conquered only to rise with stronger rebellion, but was contented with her present apparent subjection.

Dinner was served subsequently at the hour ordered, and Flora's control of her establishment supreme. Mr. Clarendon was half puzzled with his wife's new display of power, and winced a little at the thought of further exercising her sway. A ruling spirit in a woman had ever excited his aversion, and why?—he was a good deal of a despot himself. Perhaps it was well that the little orphan Flora, whom he had once deemed it condescension to marry, possessed a mind that forbade too stern dominion.

Yet, with all the spirit and decisive character of Flora, she was yet in slavery, though ~~given~~ were the chains that bound her to him in whose happiness she lived and breathed. Her existence seemed woven in the magic tie, and life or death involved in the faithlessness or fidelity of one heart—one being.

She had her domestic vexations, but they passed like clouds over a June sky, leaving no enduring shadow. A new glory seemed shed over her life. As yet, she had met with little opposition from her husband, in her resources for enjoyment. Her Bible was her daily study, and its precious teachings told her that wealth had not been her portion, without some wise purpose. She spent many hours in projecting schemes of usefulness, whereby she could aid the needy. Her well-filled purse was often opened to relieve the poor and suffering; and many objects of her benevolence blessed her, as she sought unostentatiously their homes. But discretion was not always exhibited in her charities, and with the warm impulses of her nature, she often threw away generous sums upon the underserving, and it was long before the youthful, unsuspecting Flora could learn to repulse the outstretched hand, and not to

feel that every beggar who approached her, told not a tale of truth.

But in this benevolent source of happiness, trials awaited her. While she devoted her resources, to gratify her love for doing good, the richness of her dress for which she was so liberally supplied, did not equal her husband's expectations. He often demurred at the simplicity of her attire, and when he discovered that instead of furnishing jewels, brocades, and shawls from India's loom, for his beautiful Flora, he had, through her, been bestowing charities upon old Susies, Katies, starving widows, and orphans, he was displeased, though he continued none the less liberal to the wife whom he felt reluctant to deny. As months wore away, Mr. Clarendon became more than ever noted in public life, and was more frequently at political meetings. When at home, he was fond as ever of his fascinating wife, though her simple style of dress, and the exhibition of her peculiar and independent tastes, often excited his comments and disapproval, and he had ceased to expect her to be conformable to fashionable ceremonies; still he looked for the same charms that had at first won his heart, and for the same elastic step, that had bounded to meet him when a child. He was vexed if she seemed listless, or less beautiful, than when he brought her to his home, a joyous bride. But the gay world had never possessed one attraction to Flora. She was formed by nature for the enjoyment of luxury, but the great charm that universally enslaves the follower of fashion and the partaker of her revels—the love of surpassing the competitors in the chase—to Flora had no allurements. Yet she was there in the presence of her husband, and she pleased him by her acquiescence, and so the world gazed upon, admired, criticised, and ridiculed, while a part worshiped the singular being whose attractions, wealth, and position, placed her among the leaders of the *ton*, unknown to herself. If she appeared with her raven locks unadorned at the greatest party of the season, with a dress so unpretending that her husband was displeased, simplicity became for a while the rage in the Clarendon clique, while even her bewitching tones were imitated by many who betrayed their ambition to resemble their unaffected queen. But if to please her husband she floated through the next gay circle, rich in attire, and sparkling with jewels, the prevailing taste as suddenly changed, and those who could not purchase

diamonds, shone with borrowed light. Independence and *hauteur* of manner became also admissible, among her imitators, who unfortunately could only make themselves disagreeable, while they lacked the charm she possessed, of winning as powerfully with her magical smiles as she repelled by her coldness. To be then a favorite of the eccentric, indifferent, yet transcendently lovely wife of Mr. Clarendon, was an object of ambition with both sexes ; and emulation excited as much mortification as pleasure ; for Flora invariably turned aside with contempt, from the fawning and the sycophantic, to seek the humblest and most unassuming.

Mr. Clarendon seemed, at times, as much dazzled as the circle she drew about her ; but he felt his presence dangerous to her popularity ; for if aware of his approach, her eyes followed him, as the flower seeks the sun, and every glance in her eloquent face told plainer than words could betray, that she longed for the quiet of home, with the society of one dearer than all that the world could offer her, in its flattery.

But Flora sacrificed her tastes to her husband's love of the world, though she claimed her reward. Wearing with dissipation, she still went her daily rounds of benevolence, until, at last, her husband became so much dissatisfied with her charitable pursuits, that he protested strongly against her continuing them, and insisted upon an entire change in her habits. He complained that she was becoming languid and pale, which he attributed to her frequenting sickly haunts. In vain Flora would plead the last night's gaiety to which she had been unaccustomed.

So time rolled on, while she alternately delighted and annoyed her exacting, but still adoring husband. She studied to gratify his wishes, but her golden robin was as well trained for many of the scenes in which she was expected to act her part. Impulsive and wayward, and in many of her fancies as untutored as a fawn of the forest, she was often in trouble, and as requiring of indulgence as the child of the young guardian's adoption ; and many a pettish cry she had upon the shoulder of her fond husband, who scolded her for her rudeness, when he wished for her most politic smiles.

The etiquette of the dinner-table he often accused her of neglecting, and much to his annoyance, forgetting, in her artless chat with her neighbors, her duty as a hostess. But a look from her husband would generally recall her attention, and the

neglected guest was ready to forgive the delinquency when the rising crimson of her cheek, excited by her husband's disapproval, so consciously spoke her sensitiveness to his displeasure.

Upon one occasion her favorite bird flew from its cage, and after fluttering over the table, alighted on the shoulder of its mistress. To the company this was but a diversion, and excited Flora's tenderness for her golden-winged pet; but at the moment, a gentleman had asked her to drink wine with him, which courtesy, instead of accepting, she disregarded, in her devotion to her little warbler. The incident and its consequences, which exhibited the wayward impulses of the young wife, instead of the elegant, self-possessed woman, who would have been undisturbed by the entrance of a troop of blackbirds on such an occasion, chagrined her husband, especially as the person was none else than an English gentleman of distinction, by the name of Dethwaite, and accompanied by his sister, in honor of whom the party had been given. Naught but graceful raillery, exhibited the hidden feeling on the part of the accomplished host, but Flora had met her husband's look; it spoke volumes to her sensitive spirit, and tears brighter than the diamonds on her bosom glittered in her eyes; and but for the smile that as quickly followed, would have fallen, and occasioned him double mortification. Flora was, however, no "child-wife," for her house was orderly, and tasteful, and her dinners unexceptionable; but if all the nobles of England sat at her table, so untutored was her nature, so fervent and enthusiastic her love for all objects of her attachment, that feeling would exhibit itself on occasions when apparent indifference would have been more conformable to the woman of society.

But hours came when each guest had departed, when released from the convivial circle, Flora was permitted to throw aside her gorgeous apparel for a simple robe, and in delicious retirement in her own home, rest from the weariness of etiquette, and feast on the anticipation of a quiet future. These periods of freedom were richly prized. Her equipage was a source of much enjoyment, contributing essentially to the gratification of her tastes, and enabling her to fulfill the object of every mission, her heart or inclination prompted her to seek.

As months wore away, Flora's jealous requirement of her husband's society was unabated, and the most precious moments of her existence were those circumscribed by his leisure hours,

when, in her own home circle, she could yield him, as of old, her single devotion, while she seemed as yet his idol. She became sometimes impatient by his long periods of absence, but joy at his return overcame grief, and her welcome was without tears.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

If tenderness touched her, the dark of her eye,
 At once took a darker, a heavenlier dye,
 From the depth of whose shadow, like holy revealings
 From innermost shrines came the light of her feelings.
 MOORE.

"FLORA, how many beggars did you visit yesterday? you are losing your health, and wasting money in this charity business."

So Mr. Clarendon addressed his wife, sitting at the breakfast table, while the morning newspaper chiefly occupied him. He had returned home at a late hour the night previous, and awoke with a headache, which did not serve to give a flattering aspect to Flora's acts of benevolence.

"I visit no beggars, dear," said Flora, "those that do not beg, need charity more."

"But you are looking ill with your exertions. I cannot permit you"——

Before Mr. Clarendon had ceased, the door of the breakfast room opened, and a child, clad in rags, ill-looking, and dirty, brushed past him, with a little hungry dog at his heels. The cur instantly snatched a bone from the table, by mounting a chair, and then darting for the door, first trailing his booty over the morning robe of Mr. Clarendon.

The boy stood with his eyes and mouth extended, gazing on the splendor about him.

Mr. Clarendon laid himself back in his seat, first looking at Flora, then at his gown, and lastly at the boy, with an expression that grew more indignant each moment.

Flora was momentarily dismayed, in the consequences brought upon herself, in her character for benevolence. But

the independence of her nature soon showed itself; she felt conscious of no intended wrong, therefore, quietly told the waiter to take the boy to the kitchen, with a reproof for allowing him an entrance into the breakfast room. Timothy insisted however, that the vagrant rushed passed him, without his knowledge, but the discussion was not of long continuance; Benson having obtained a sight of him through the open door, when, without ceremony, she collared the urchin, and dragged him backwards to the kitchen stairway, down which she sent him like a ball, against the cook, who was about giving the waiter a dish of toast, just ordered by her master,—which consequently, in the concussion, flooded the boy, and went streaming on the floor, to the utter consternation of all parties.

"Now lick it up," said Benson with a cuff, "and if you show your monkey face into a gentleman's parlor again, I'll send you out of the window, instead of the door."

"A pretty scrape!" said the exasperated cook—"when a gentleman orders a dish of toast, and this kick up is all that's made of it. What's this dog doing here any way, and how came he sent at me, like a brick-bat?"

The boy sat meanwhile on the floor making a good meal; the dog having escaped yelping with a kick from Timothy out of a side door, with more consciousness of being unwelcome than his juvenile master. After the hubbub was over, Mr. Clarendon asked impatiently "Why the toast was not sent up?"

"I will see, sir," said the waiter, who soon came back, endeavoring to conceal a grin, while he said,

"The boy's licking it off the floor, sir."

"Do you mean to be insolent," replied Mr. Clarendon angrily—"get the dish I ordered."

"The cook says that you will be obliged sir, to wait for some to be made. Benson smashed the boy gin the cook,—the toast lathered the boy, and he's now in the thickest on't."

"Pitch him into the street, and if ever you admit one of these dirty rascals into my doors, I'll discharge you."

"But, sir"——

"I will hear no excuses. Obey my orders, and tell Benson to see to the toast. You see what has arisen, Flora, from your charities." The waiter vanished.

"I am sorry," said Flora. "The hall door must have been left open."

Mr. Clarendon saw that Flora was disturbed by his displea-

sure, and resolved that he would drop the present difficulty, and take the opportunity to deliver his sentiments on home missions, which, in his view, were most reprehensible.

Flora listened patiently, but was unfortunately prevented replying by the reception of a note. She perused it, and laid it aside for further attention.

"A card of invitation?" inquired Mr. Clarendon.

"No," said the ingenuous wife, "I am requested by a lady to accompany her to — street."

"And for what?"

"A poor girl, whom we have visited, is, she says, very ill, and wishes to see me."

"Fanaticism, absurdity! Small-pox or measles, which are you exposed to? These proceedings shall be stopped," said Mr. Clarendon, imperatively.

"Excuse me one moment," said Flora, a little agitated. She hastened to the kitchen, and inquired if the boy was still waiting.

"Yes ma'am," said the cook. "I've put him in the scullery to stay, till you finish breakfast, ma'am."

"Have you given him anything, Betsy?"

"Benson gave him more than he wanted, ma'am. He licked the floor, and Benson licked him."

"Fill his basket, Betsy, and send him away immediately."

The boy came out of the scullery, and soon escaped with his loaded basket, not stopping to arrange his cambric, which Benson had left in a decided state of confusion.

Flora returned to her husband. The latter felt that he had annoyed and troubled her; calling her towards him, he took from his pocket a small jewel-case, and handed it to her. She received it with a smile, and went to her dressing-room, whither he followed her.

"Why don't you look at it?" said he.

"I have."

"Will they do?"

With a smile, Flora shook from her fingers a little necklace, and placed it among misty laces and embroidery, then turning to her husband, rallied him on his ill-humor, while she said playfully, "Be good natured before you go."

With one hand on her shoulder, he replied, earnestly. "You can make me so, by promising to go to no more of these sickly haunts; name the sum you wish, and it shall be

appropriated according to your desires, but I cannot suffer you to contaminate yourself longer. I fear the consequences of such imprudence."

"But poor Ellen may die, and I never see her!"

"How long have you visited her?"

"For several months."

"So much the worse, if she is so ill. She may die, and you with her! Hear me, Flora, I forbid you going again."

"This once," said Flora, pleadingly.

"No. There is too much risk involved to yourself. I've been annoyed enough. Don't irritate me by urging this. Why, you'll bring a set of infantry after you, as ragged as Falstaff's."

"But poor Ellen is no vagrant. She is a sick orphan."

"But, my dear, you are exposed."

"Not in the least. She has the consumption."

"There are asylums enough for her—the hospital"—

"But you are not so unkind," said Flora.

"But I will be, if you don't refuse to go. At once decline."

"I don't like to," persisted Flora. She saw that her husband was determined in his opposition to her visit, so she wrote the note required.

Her disappointment was evident, but Mr. Clarendon's aversion was so great to her pursuits, that he felt no regret at overruling her wishes, and left her, impatient and disturbed.

Flora went to her chamber, with her heart swelling with sympathy for the dying girl, whom she knew it would comfort to see her. She cried with disappointment. Then she prepared some delicacies, and with a dish of choice grapes, sent them to the invalid. They had scarcely been sent when a loud ring was heard from the door bell, and a note received from the same lady, saying that "poor Ellen was dying, and that all the wish she expressed was to see her dear, kind friend."

Flora went to her dressing-room for a few moments. She was perplexed what to do: to disobey her husband, or to go to see poor Ellen. She thought how much good she might do by soothing the last moments of one whose days of suffering she had cheered and comforted. She felt that in this act, she followed the example of Him who went about doing good, and she believed that it was her duty to go, though against the commands of her husband.

So Flora met her friend at the door of her mansion, and they proceeded to the abode of the invalid.

On her errands of mercy, Flora had learned to love the dying orphan. She had long soothed her sufferings with tender nursing, and drawn her from thoughts of the grave and its terrors to a world of happiness. She had brought to her bed-side, her own beloved clergyman, who carried her in the arms of faith to the mercy seat, as one of God's chosen ones. She had bade her throw herself, with her sins and unworthiness, at the foot of the cross—to trust and be saved. She had led her, step by step, in the paths of righteousness, until the poor girl found peace in believing, and could exclaim, "Where all is darkness, now I see light—I am rich beyond the riches of earth in the hope of Heaven."

She now arrived, for the last time, at the door of her patient, whose approaching dissolution was evident, and had the blessed consolation of hearing words of peace, from lips closing in death. For the first time, since her childhood, she witnessed the sad spectacle. A hired nurse, and her accompanying friend were with her. Thus they met the fell destroyer. No relative was near to receive the last sigh of the orphan, or mourn her loss. The breath of the lowly sufferer was expended in blessings on the kind being who had been to her one of earth's angels. Flora sunk by her bed-side, and prayed for the immortal spirit already plumed for its upper flight. The eyes veiled with death's darkening mists cast upon her their last rays, and from the voice, fast failing, she heard the words of whispered peace and happiness. The sad offices remaining were performed under the direction of Flora. She then parted the hair on the brow of the dead sleeper, crossed the pallid hands on the bosom now cold, and left her. Why did Flora once more return? once more lift the veil from the still placid features?—a shadow came over her memory—she had seen death before, it was a dim recollection, but it held her spell-bound. In the hands of the dead, she placed a white rose, plucked from a small bush, now bereft of its wonted care, and again left for her home. To one of the attendants, she handed her purse, while she gave directions for the burial of the deceased. At the door of the darkened chamber she met Dr. Vale, to whom she gave her hand, and said, feelingly, "You are too late."

"Yes, poor Ellen has gone, but she is the earlier in

Heaven. I was here before you came ; she wished much to see you. I am glad her desire was granted."

"Oh, Doctor, she has interested me much." Flora hid her tearful eyes, and passed out.

During her absence, her husband had returned home, and inquired for her, and was answered by a note she had hastily pencilled, which he found in his library, that ran thus :—

"DEAREST HUSBAND,

"Forgive me, I am going to see poor Ellen, she is dying, and has sent for me. Don't be angry."

But Mr. Clarendon was displeased and disappointed—he had come for his wife to join an excursion with a party of friends, among whom was Madame Delano. He was thoroughly vexed, and having anticipated the trip with pleasure, was the more disturbed at Flora's rebellion to his expressed wishes.

He wrote a few words in reply, and left the house.

"I came home for you, Flora, to accompany me on a pleasure trip, but as you are absent, I must go without you."

Flora returned sad and tearful, her nerves had borne a shock that much affected her, and when she received her husband's cold note, she wept with real sorrow.

Flora now remembered seeing Madame Delano, as she stepped into her carriage, and recollected how painfully her gaiety had affected her, as with coquettish levity she greeted her companions.

The scene from which she had parted made the contrast deep. Since reading her husband's note she was sure that the gay belle had formed one of the pleasure-party, and a jealous pang shot through her heart at the thought ; she might have formed its chief attraction to her husband.

She retired to her chamber in heavy sorrow, only consoled by the conviction that she had done what she believed right. In the meanwhile, Mr. Clarendon had sought the party, and with mingled emotions entered conspicuously into the festivities of the occasion, while his wife was lying pale and sorrowful upon her bed, listening in imagination to the knell of the departed, and mourning her husband's disapprobation of her

errand. He was with the pleasure-party, inspired by music and the smiles of beauty.

With the fascinating Madame Delano he was soon made captive, forgetting, meanwhile, the sensitive being whom his conscience told him he must have grieved. Evening came on. The absent husband had not returned. Flora finally slept, and awoke refreshed and more calm. As night approached, she grew anxious and troubled; her mind roved through the past, she reviewed her life, her sad childhood, with its mysterious veil, her passionate dream of succeeding years; the interval of trial that separated her from her guardian, and the workings of a mind that finally made its peace with God. She drew a picture of her husband, and asked her heart why he might not become dear to another, where he yielded his devotion. But was he not governed by principle as well as love? the query was followed by a sweet feeling of confidence. Yes, he was her own true-hearted husband. He came not, but in the depths of her soul she could trust him, and when her prayers ascended to Heaven for her idol, it was with a child's faith—faith in his integrity, and with a holy confidence in Him who could preserve him pure and blameless. She fell asleep with the peaceful belief that forgiveness awaited her on her husband's return. She knew not of the alluring cup from which he drank the dregs of pleasure's bowl, or of the sorceress of the hour, who had detained him.

The husband found his wife unruffled, and calmly resting. In the sleep of innocence she breathed, as an infant slumbers.

He saw the traces of tears upon her eyelids, and thought that her hair lay damp and heavy off her temples, as if she had bathed them from a headache, but so motionless—so quiet was her repose, he felt that no guilt, no jealous fears were hid beneath her peaceful bosom. By her side a waning lamp stood burning, and the sacred page from which she had read. He contrasted her with the vain, seductive woman who had lured him from her; and though he felt in that moment unworthy of her presence, he laid his hand lightly upon her forehead, and gloried in the purity of her heart, the holiness of her truthful love. Asleep, and thus beautiful, he forgave her for disregarding his wishes. But morning came, and with it the recollections that had excited his displeasure. He would not own to Flora his regret for the pain he had caused her, "she was alone to blame," he said, but in promises of future abandonment of charitable visits, would he be satisfied.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Thou knowest how fearless is my trust in thee."

MISS L. B. LAMOND.

THERE was ever an eye upon the youthful Flora, that carried beneath its bland light, the fire of jealousy. For two years, Mr. Clarendon had been in society, a devoted admirer of Madame Delano, who was not only envious of his wife's beauty and piquant manners, but secretly galled by the influence which made her empress of her clique. Flora freely and openly exhibited her preferences, and without disguise made her choice of friends and acquaintances. She had early created an enemy of the noted belle, without knowledge of her husband's partiality for her society, by deliberately slighting, and excluding her from her circle, without deigning an apology to the many who marvelled at the absence of one at her soirees, who had been so generally admired, and so much a favorite with her husband. It was sufficient for Flora, that she disliked her. For this neglect, Madame Delano resolved to be revenged, and on every opportunity, when she met her husband, with artful sweetness, feigned the most humble sorrow for her want of favor with his wife, while, with unmatched art, she manœvered her own plans, the chief of which, was to secure him as a visitor at her own levees, in defiance of the scorn exhibited by Mrs. Clarendon for her demeanor.

The day following a soiree given by the former, at which Mr. Clarendon had been present, he consented, at Flora's solicitation, to make a round of visits with her. She arrayed herself for the occasion with unusual satisfaction. Her dress, however, in some trifling matter did not conform to her husband's taste, which occasioned a discussion on the subject, ending in an unfortunate allusion to the tasteful dress always worn by Madame Delano. "There is," said Mr. Clarendon,

"in her appearance, harmony of coloring, and such perfect adaptation in hues and fabrics, to her style of features, and complexion, as essentially to enhance her attractions." Flora was somewhat piqued, and replied, "that she was the last person whom she would imitate; that she felt unmitigated contempt for the woman and her dress."

"That is a strong avowal, Flora," said her husband, "Why do you dislike her?"

"Because she is a married flirt, and has apparently no other aim in life, than to feed her vanity on the admiration she receives."

"I have not observed this; perhaps my comparison displeases you. I confess that I admire the lady, and wish you would be more civil to her. By the way, I met her yesterday on Broadway,—she was shopping, and selected a pair of gloves for you, at my request."

"For me?" said Flora; "this was unnecessary."

There was little in the words, but much in the manner of Flora. Mr. Clarendon was again reminded of the contrast she presented to the woman, whose preference flattered his vanity, and whom he would gratify by some civility, at his house. He was awed by the dignity and sweetness with which Flora refused to conform to his wishes, still chagrined that he could not carry his point.

The gloves which he took from his pocket, were laid quietly aside by Flora, as he handed them to her, and others drawn on.

"You do not like the purchase?" said Mr. Clarendon, inquiringly. "They suit your dress, and are well chosen."

"But not by you, else I would wear them—come—the morning is wearing away, while we are discussing matters of no importance."

"One would fancy you jealous, Flora?"

The full, clear eyes of the wife, met those of her husband with a look of mingled pride and love—while she said, "Jealous!—no, I can never be jealous of Madame Delano; but we may walk different paths, may we not, without ill feeling?" Mr. Clarendon saw that he had mistaken Flora. She was too truthful, too pure, and confiding for such thoughts, much less towards one she despised. As yet he had made no progress in his efforts to reconcile her to his old charmer, and was puzzled how to do so. He said no more upon the subject, but

accompanied Flora on her visits, when she winningly restored his good humor, and dissipated the chagrin he had felt, at her refusal of the gloves.

In returning home, Mr. Clarendon left her upon some plea, and as she supposed, to seek his office. Sometime afterward she espied him from her carriage, talking with Madame Delano, at the door of a shop, which she was about entering. Flora's lip slightly curled, as she witnessed the vivacity, and expressive action of the lady, while with one hand upon her husband's arm, she attracted his attention to her carriage. Flora also met her husband's eye; her smile betrayed surprise, but no emotion of displeasure. She was serious on her ride home, for she wondered at his civility to one whom she regarded with so little favor; and was somewhat grieved that he had left her so abruptly.

Mr. Clarendon was absent from home at dinner, but she believed that his business engagements were engrossing, and tried to amuse herself with music and reading. With Sappho, in her favorite resort, the library, she awaited his coming, with increased impatience, as hours flew by, ungladdened by her husband's presence. Suddenly her eye brightens, her lips are apart—she listens for the loved footsteps—with a bound she flies to meet him, he folds her in his arms, and asks her the cause of her agitation.

"Oh, nothing—nothing," she replied, "joy makes me foolish, and you had been gone so long."

Her salutation was affectionately received. Mr. Clarendon more than ever prized his confiding wife. His eye is somewhat averted, while she tells him that she saw him while returning home, and with whom, and thought he must have been immeasurably bored. "But what has detained you?" Flora questioned, drawing her fingers through his hair.

"Never mind now, Flora, I am going to write, don't disturb me." Mr. Clarendon put his wife gently aside, while he took up a pen. Flora obeyed with the full assurance of her husband's fidelity, while she scorned the thought of his susceptibility to the charms of Madame Delano, or the possibility that he could become a dupe to her arts.

The following evening, Mr. Clarendon informed Flora that his English friends had returned from Niagara, and that they must entertain them the ensuing week. Flora hesitated, and then gave a cheerful assent. She knew, from the manner of

her husband, that he could not be easily dissuaded from his purpose.

"How do you like Miss Dethwaite?" said he.

"Very much. She is open and ingenuous."

"She reminds me of you, in the expression of her mouth."

"I like her, and Mr. Dethwaite too. They are wholly unartificial. How long do they remain?"

"Not long. The object of their visit is to seek the child of a deceased brother, whom they have lost sight of a number of years. I shall have much business with him; unless he finds the heiress, he succeeds to the estate."

"I did not think that I could have met your old friend so indifferently."

"You did not think, that if I had had the inclination I could have married so distinguished a personage. These aristocratic English belles are not so easily made republicans of."

"You certainly made a more humble marriage." Flora sighed and thought of the mystery of her birth, and of the stain that rested upon it; and how noble had been the sacrifice of pride on her husband's part in wedding her. How could she ever doubt his love? Mr. Clarendon saw the current of her thoughts, and changed the subject."

"I am glad," said he, "to show these people some civility. We must give them a handsome reception. Whom shall we invite, Flora?"

"I will arrange the matter."

"I am afraid that you will be very exclusive." A smile accompanied the remark.

"I certainly shall make exceptions to the general company we meet."

"You will give offence, I fear."

"That with me is not a matter of the first consideration."

"You know that we must invite some for policy, some for their musical powers, and a few for friendship."

"No, my dear sir, none for friendship—no friend can I compliment in such an assemblage. Money can furnish us music; if not, one public singer I shall exclude." The remark closed with a smile.

Mr. Clarendon affected not to observe to whom it had reference.

"Well, my love," he replied, "make out your list in your own way—subject to amendment," he added, significantly.

Mrs. Clarendon is "at home," to-night. Brilliant is the scene within, though as yet hushed stillness pervades the spacious apartments. No satin slipper has trod the gay carpet of flowers, or the face of beauty borrowed new radiance from the illumined chandeliers that gild each flowery saloon. Pendant lustres flash and sparkle like thousand rainbows, while the soft hues of drapery multiplied in mirrored light, shadowing forms of sculptured marble, paintings, old and rare, form a scene of dreamlike beauty. Noiseless feet glide about for the re-arrangement of drooping flowers, or the looping of sweeping folds of damask, while back and forth the host paces from mirror to mirror, thoughtless, seemingly, of the present hour.

Flora Clarendon is yet at her toilette. A casket of jewels is before her. She holds in her fingers, clusters of brilliant gems, and the ornaments she suspends upon her neck, are each in turn laid aside. Neither rubies, emeralds, nor the quivering light of the opal or diamond, suit the lady's delicate taste. In vain her maid endeavors to dazzle her eye with magnificence. She chooses a robe of sable velvet, with a train of ample length, and braids her hair with simplicity. Flora Clarendon has taken a last glance at her mirror, and drawing on her gloves, she passed down the staircase, into the drawing-room. She knew scarcely why, but on this occasion she was ambitious, and verily her home seemed one of flowery luxury. Mr. Clarendon was awaiting her coming, and approached his wife.

"You look well," he said, eyeing her narrowly.

Together they promenaded the spacious rooms, while at each glance, Mr. Clarendon more than ever admired the classic elegance of Flora's appearance. Yet there was strange embarrassment in his manner; something unusual seemed upon his mind.

Soon, carriages were heard before the door, light and

hurried steps thronged the hall, while the murmuring of voices proclaimed the assembling of the guests. Through the congregated rooms was heard the soft flutter of feathers, the rustling of satins, while the lustre of diamond light flashed like a canopy of stars. The dazzling throng, composed of the courtly and distinguished, paid their respects to their beautiful hostess, and moved onwards, like the soft murmurings of gorgeous leaves.

The belles of the great metropolis were brilliantly gay. Each seemed to have vied to surpass the other in their attire; and the high spirits and sparkling vivacity of each social coterie, showed the entire success of the fair hostess, in the choice of her well-assorted guests. Flora moved among the crowd queen-like—to all courteous, and to many affable. To-night she had waived her preferences, and made all happy by her smiles. She had resolved to please, at least, her husband, who had censured her so often for her rudeness; but he seemed, for the first time, not to observe her, and grew each moment more abstracted.

The company had all assembled. The English strangers, and the distinguished circle their position drew around them, formed a brilliant set, of which Flora was the magnet. Her simple loveliness seemed to charm Mr. Dethwaite, and his sister's gaze was riveted upon her like one spell-bound. The former was a distinguished barrister in his own country, and of noble descent. He possessed vast wealth, and an estate in England that rivalled that of the proudest earl. His sister was a high-bred and elegant woman, of reserved manners, and aristocratic bearing.

After the bestowal of some civility upon the strangers, Mr. Clarendon disappeared in the crowd, and to Flora he seemed lost for the evening, so long he remained absent from her sight. She heard the sound of music from a sweet voice, and doubted little that he was well entertained, though she regretted that he had not found enjoyment nearer herself. But Flora had become accustomed to his roving habits, and reconciled herself to them with her characteristic nobleness. She had listened with intense interest to Mr. Dethwaite's relation of the circumstances which brought him to America; and had already formed an attachment to his sister.

The latter talked much of Mr. Clarendon when in England, and told Flora of the strong friendship which they had once

formed. The little cross of coral (her gift to Mr. Clarendon), was mentioned, when Flora produced her own, corresponding precisely to it in its exquisite carving. The circumstance much surprised Miss Dethwaite, who supposed her own without a copy.

Colonel Livingston and Cora had arrived early in the evening. The former was much delighted with the new accession to the company, and paid great deference to the distinguished Mr. Dethwaite and his sister.

Mr. Clarendon was absent when Cora and her father presented themselves to their hostess, but soon made a brief salutation to them, and again vanished. The latter seemed also everywhere among her visitors, where she often heard her husband's name mentioned, and generally with a significant smile. The secret of his disappearance was at last explained. She was standing in the centre of one of the drawing-rooms : around her stood the English party and a circle of the Livingstons from New York and the Hudson, with many other guests of distinction. She had become somewhat disturbed by the inattention of her husband to his friends ; when, he appeared from the library, bringing towards her Madame Delano. She was not among her invited guests ; at least, known to herself. She came forward, graceful, beautiful, and full of fascinating smiles. No agitation or shame seemed to cause her emotion, as she paid her respects to the hostess, from whom she had never received aught but scorn and indifference. Her fair, round arms were adorned with jewels, and a wreath of delicate flowers lay among the tresses of her rich brown hair, giving a fairy effect to her appearance. Her eyes were full of seductive fire, and her red lip spoke triumph and disdain of favor. She knew that with Mr. Clarendon she had managed successfully ; and had appeared at the first magnificent *fête* of her enemy and imperious rival, though uninvited by her hostess. She felt security from rudeness, while on the arm she leaned, and in conscious beauty braved her secret displeasure.

Madame Delano had misjudged Flora Clarendon. She could trust like a child, but her faith once shaken, no situation, no conventionalities of society, could compel her to spare the injurer mortification.

The sarcastic smile, the laugh that hid a sneer, was now understood, and she had been the dupe !

Flora saw the approach of her unexpected visitor, but a pil-

lar of marble seemed as expressionless as her face, upon which her husband cast a bland, beseeching look.

Slowly her eyes turned upon Madame Delano. From the crown of her head to her feet, she scanned her, without a word in return to her salutation. Scorn sat on every lineament, while with haughty dignity she said to her husband :

"This is not only a mistake but an intrusion, Mr. Clarendon." The eyes of many spectators were on the presuming visitor, and the adventurous husband. Madame Delano turned pale with rage. The chivalry of her host could not allow him to see her annihilated by even the contempt she merited. "It is colder here," he said, forcing a smile. "than in the music room. Shall we return?" The lady still held his arm.

Flora anticipated the movement ; her color receded, till even her lips were pallid. The fire of the Italian burned in her veins. Rage flashed in the eyes of the repulsed visitor, she cast an appealing glance upon her embarrassed host. Tears swam in her eyes, while her bosom rose and fell with agitation. The eyes of Flora he knew were also upon him, as well as those of her guests. The wife witnessed the struggle. She felt that now was the die of her happiness cast ; she neither looked at, nor seemed conscious of the presence of his companion. The radiance of her eyes dimmed that of the jewels around her, while her face was colorless as the pearls on her brow.

With a look, deep and searching, one that thrilled with a cold shudder his veins, she whispered to her husband, while she laid her hand impressively upon his arm, "Decide now—this woman, or your wife."

The lip of the husband was rigid with emotion ; he murmured, inaudibly to all others but to her who listened, "I still ask your trust." With Madame Delano he instantly disappeared from the saloon, and at the door, consigned her to a gentleman, who disappeared with his fair charge, all wondering, but a few who had witnessed the brief *entrée* and exit of Madame, why she had so early left a scene of so much gaiety.

In that moment, Louis Clarendon felt the power of love and virtue—the magic of an appeal that through a long life, never passed from his memory. He had been again ensnared, but the wings of a dove had fluttered near his heart, and broken the charm. He knew that he had deeply erred ; that he had braved his wife's displeasure to gratify the ambition and the vanity of an unprincipled woman, by bringing her within the pale of her chosen circle, trusting to the excitement of the

hour, and the timidity of woman's nature, to conceal the presumption and insolence on her part, and the wrong on his.

Fear vanished from Flora's nature when actuated by a sense of injury. Truth was her watchword, and virtue her standard. Mr. Clarendon was again the courtly host. To his wife he manifested an entire return of devotion; new inspiration seemed given the true, pure-hearted Flora. Few knew the cause of her sudden elation of spirits, and but one heard her whispered appeal. Cora had witnessed her triumph, and her fears vanished for the young wife's happiness.

The musical powers of Madame Delano added vastly to the attractions of the gay belle, whose envy and jealousy had been excited by the dawn of a new star in the musical world, and one so brilliantly gifted as Mrs. Louis Clarendon.

In compass of voice, Madame Delano was the equal of Flora, and until the latter subdued the senses of her circle of admirers with her voice of thrilling sweetness, that swelled like the imagined tones of a seraph on the ears of her listeners, the fair enslaver had been unrivalled.

Her ambition had at once been excited; the most able masters aided in the cultivation of her powers, and after a period of silence, Madame burst upon her astonished clique with a brilliancy of execution which she had not been supposed capable of attaining.

If she could not sing as well, she could now play better than Flora; she therefore, omitted no opportunity to delight her old admirer with her improved talent.

Flora had seen her aim with contempt; she made no effort to out-rival her, but with seeming apathy had watched the effect of the lady's talents upon her husband. She knew that his ear was highly cultivated, and that he nicely discriminated between a natural gift, and that degree of excellence, which practice can only ensure the performer.

Flora was naturally, a child of song, and conscious of rare endowments, and she determined that Mr. Clarendon should not long be disappointed in her execution. In the presence of Madame Delano, she never sought to excel, or equal her. Flora was too proud to show this emulation, though often, in some retired corner, she would gratify a choice few by a song of unpretending sweetness.

Mr. Dethwaite was now in conversation with Mr. Clarendon. The evening had glided on time's swiftest pinions to the hour of one. Suddenly the former exclaimed:

"I am much overpowered by the manners and appearance of Mrs. Clarendon. She reminds me of one that I once knew. Her eye has the same power."

"Ah!"

"Your wife is an Englishwoman, I believe"——

"She was an orphan when I married her."

At this moment music was heard in the adjoining room. The gentlemen ceased their conversation. The voice of Flora rose high and clear, every sound was hushed, while in silence the crowd listened to the melting strains. Madame Delano was not present, and to-night Flora had determined fully to gratify her husband.

The words of her song were pure and elevated, such as called forth the pathos of her tones. Low and clear as the silver notes of a robin, she trilled and warbled, and then with compass such as few possessed, swelled her soprano voice to its full power. Mr. Dethwaite was bewildered with the strange enchantment. He was carried into the past. Flora ceased, when he said :

"I have never heard but one voice like hers. She was one of Italy's sweetest singers."

Mr. Clarendon was gratified, and with his companion proceeded to the music-room.

The song of Flora was followed by a piece of music requiring brilliant execution. He was sorry that she had attempted it, fearing that she could not excel. But Flora had practised for a favorable occasion, and with a master hand touched the keys of her instrument. She was excited and animated. She had not yet felt the presence of her husband. A moment more, and he appeared with Mr. Dethwaite, when she was suddenly inspired. Her fingers flew over the keys. She far surpassed the most admirable performance of Madame Delano.

Again she was called upon for a song. She sung one touching and sweet. As she ceased, a whisper met her ear, and in low tones her husband repeated :

"And as thy bright lips sung, they caught
So beautiful a ray,
That as I gazed, I almost thought
The spirit of thy lay
Had left while melting in the air
Its sweet expression painted there."

Flora looked at the page of music which her husband held. It contained no words like those he spoke. She thanked him with her eyes, and rose serenely happy. She had fully gratified his pride. Mr. Clarendon then sought Cora Livingston, to request her to play ; but at the moment supper was announced. Accordingly he led the way to the entertainment with Cora, while his wife followed with Mr. Dethwaite. Miss Dethwaite proceeded, escorted by Colonel Livingston, who was in a complacent mood, having an inherent passion for English aristocracy, and being now in the enjoyment of society, whose rank equalled that of his ancestors.

The entertainment befitted the occasion, yet Flora forgot that she was mistress of the feast, that on her reflected the honor of the occasion. She knew only that she had wrested her husband from a precipice of danger, and that he had proved to her his devotion and love. She felt that she had bruised the head of the serpent, even at the door of her own Paradise ; and expelled it in its glittering beauty, as sin was driven from the bower of Eden.

But all at last was over, and the "banquet-hall deserted." The lights still burn in the flower-strewn rooms of merriment, and gay voices are silent in the lately thronged apartments. The revellers have gone, and Flora and her husband are alone.

Not a word is said by either, of the incident uppermost in their thoughts. But deep tenderness soothes the heart of the young wife, and tones gushing with fondness plead the word forgive !

CHAPTER XXX.

As mongrels bay the lion in his cage.

DR. JOHNSON.

"I SHOULD like, my daughter," said Colonel Livingston to Cora, "to invite Mr. Dethwaite and his sister to dine with us this week."

"Well, papa."

"Also your aunt Livingston, Mrs. Sidney, the Clarendons, and a few others. We will have the circle very select, and endeavor to entertain them handsomely. Their engagements are so numerous it will be well to invite them to-day."

"Shall I do so?"

"Yes, and propose Thursday next. We will engage an extra professional cook, so that nothing shall fail in the dinner arrangements, and all I ask of you, is to keep Judy out of sight, and to have the silver polished, and the largest pieces conspicuously arranged; the pitchers, tankards, and waiters. Bring out the old cutglass. There are now-a-days, so much mushroom gentility, and so much washed splendor, that antique things, however worn and dull, show well. I would have nothing go wrong on this occasion, for the price of the homestead."

Colonel Livingston looked about on his house and premises, with renewed satisfaction; he was glad that so much of its old-fashioned appearance was preserved, and thought, at this moment, that every stiff, high-backed chair, sentinelled about the large wainscoted rooms, worth each its weight in gold. The old heavy curtains too, hung well; every fold in the flowered damask made him think of his grandmother's rich brocades, that could, seemingly, as well walk alone, as propelled by her dignified ladyship. The carpet of the drawing-rooms was worn, and faded, but, at this moment, he would not have exchanged it for the newest and most splendid, for upon it the old stock of the Livingstons had trod in their silken hose, and knee-buckles, making every thread of it of priceless value.

Although the Colonel's new possessions had brought him new pains, new anxieties, and new responsibilities, he would have risked the most incurable gout, rather than go back to his former humble style of living. So he felt to-day; for he had now an opportunity of entertaining the aristocracy of England, in a style befitting his position. His daughter, also, he thanked Heaven, had allied herself to no low-bred scion of America's democracy, but, in her loveliness, was still a match worthy of an English nobleman. He felt that she had had a narrow escape from a degrading alliance, but that her old love-affair had fortunately resulted in a harmless correspondence. He considered her in no danger of burying herself in a log hut in Virginia; and as he nursed his gouty foot, and dreamed in his old-fashioned chair, which forbade any curvature of the spine, the thought crossed his mind that the English widower

might not improbably pay his addresses to his daughter, and at last, save her from the dangerous chasm of an unsuitable marriage in a country which levelled all ranks.

He had but one objection to inviting Mrs. Clarendon on this occasion, for, well connected as she was, who knew the history of her birth, or the position of her family? and the subject of genealogy might be broached, and he verily believed if she was the daughter of a tinker, that she would own it, if only to mortify him. Still he thought so much style and rank as would to-day be exhibited, must awe the most thoughtless, and he meant that everything should be conducted in a manner suitable to the dignity of the occasion.

But the reader must remember that these thoughts were entirely private, for Colonel Livingston, with all his peculiarities, was a gentleman.

The invitations were sent and accepted, and on the day appointed the father and daughter resorted to the drawing-room of "The Park," where every article of furniture had apparently acquired new dignity, so stiff and unbending stood both drapery and mahogany. With these rooms, Cora had little to do, or they would have better harmonized with herself. The other apartments in the house were airy and tasteful, and were not kept in such grand order, so that Cora seldom went into the gloomy large parlors; for here Mr. Roger Wilton had shot himself, which on her mind, was a much more distinct vision than the powder-puffed and knee-buckled forms of her ancestors.

But to-day, with her father, she had surveyed each piece of tapestry and painted canvas; and had well shaken out each fold of thick damask, and so opened the window-shutters that not an object of faded family grandeur should be hidden from the view; and after ascertaining from her father's satisfied countenance that all was sufficiently imposing, she went to the dining-rooms to see that arrangements there were perfect.

Cora found the table already laid, everything new being cautiously discarded. On every shining piece of silver, the Livingston crest was distinctly visible, and disposed with policy and effect.

"Does the position of the dragon suit your honor?" said the consequential woolly-headed master of ceremonies. "I have been endeavoring to place him in all instances, with his head up."

Cora laughed, and the Colonel reddened. "What is this?" said the latter, opening a covered basket just received from New York—"Go away, Judy:—don't you lay fingers, girl, on an article in this room, and if you come nearer the house than the buckwheat field to day, I'll discharge you."

"Why, papa," said Cora, her glossy ringlets falling over the basket, "this is from aunt Livingston, for the table to-day; her superb caster-stand! and massive silver pitchers! here also are the old china mugs that belonged to great grandfather somebody!"

"Very kind of her truly—place them in view, Smithson."

"And put these beautiful flowers in the centre; look at them! are they not exquisite?" said Cora, "and these cut glass goblets will look pretty too."

"Leave all to Smithson, my daughter"—an injunction which well pleased Cora, for she felt how great to-day was the responsibility of pleasing her father.

"Now go and dress, my daughter, they will arrive by six," Cora tripped over the staircase to her chamber, and thoughtless of the grandeur on the way, and the grandeur below stairs, had a frolic with her little squirrel, that Wilton had left, and then after reading over, and kissing his last letter, abstractedly commenced the operations of her toilette.

Her ringlets were soon arranged in their sunny waves; and her airy figure in snowy muslin folds of lace and diamonds, completing her attire.

She seemed no part of the stately magnificence of the establishment; but by her father, like a young rose bud against a pedestal of bronze.

The company have arrived; and have been ushered into the reception chamber, while Cora and her father await them below—all but Flora Clarendon, who has caught a view of Cora and hastened forward to greet her, in defiance of the majestic wave of the footman, who stands like a picture of Washington, upon a tavern sign—one arm extended, while his eyes peer aloft. The rest of the company obeyed the signal—but Mrs. Clarendon, as usual, followed her impulses. The greeting once over, Flora ascended the staircase; where at the head of it her husband awaited her, while she went to her dressing room. Here she found Miss Dethwaite, in a simple and elegant costume, as unpretending as herself in her appearance. A cordial, even affectionate greeting, passed between

them. Flora was in delicate health ; and seemed regardless of all but her comfort ; her dress was graceful and becoming—she wore few ornaments, and, Miss Dethwaite thought, was so classically beautiful that she needed none. She had already caught a view of Cora's room, and her pet squirrel, and in defiance of the frowns of her husband at her delay, had stopped to play with it.

Her ringing laugh met Cora's ear, who longed to go and see what had amused the gay Flora, but her father would not have approved of her absenting herself from the parlor, so she patiently awaited the advent of the visitors. Soon, ease and freedom pervaded the stiff drawing-rooms, and none more aided in unbending the usual frigidity of the hour before dinner, than the English guests. Mr. Clarendon was at home, and as usual courteous, elegant, and agreeable. His piquant wife was anything, and everything she pleased to be, and just now full of caprices. So Cora indulged her in all her whims, one of which was to take a stroll through the grounds, and visit the tombstones under the willows. Her husband protested that the ground was damp, but, with a pretty defiant shake of the head, she amused herself as she liked, and much to Cora's diversion, and the Colonel's shocked taste, had left the drawing-room, and wandered off. No one followed her, for she said that she preferred going alone, but the Colonel was much amazed to see her from the parlor window, far down on the grounds, in conversation with Judy—whom he supposed had been sent off the premises. Judy had changed a good deal the past year, but the alteration had come over her so gradually that the prejudiced Colonel could not see it—and she was still in his eyes the same "troublesome child ;" but Cora did not think so—kindness could do anything with Judy, and even now, grown as she was, she would hunt hens' eggs, all day, if she deemed that Miss Cora thought she appeared better at a distance.

So when Mrs. Clarendon beckoned to her, to come and tie up her slipper, Judy cautiously leaped the fence, and retreated again over the stile, saying that she had an errand at one of the neighbors.

"Well, then, run quickly," said Flora, "and take this flower for your services."

The action and smile took the heart of Judy. It was a trifle, but the pleasure it gave the child lasted her through the

day. Mrs. Clarendon came in before dinner, and was ready to follow the Colonel and Miss Dethwaite to the sumptuous entertainment, which actually dimmed the watery eyes of the host, and dazzled those of the admiring guests, such perfection of taste, such elegance and luxury was displayed at the feast.

The guests all appropriately seated, and the Englishman at the right of Cora, who, with self-possession and grace, placed herself at the head of the table, the Colonel was entirely satisfied. Smithson had outdone himself; and the cook had equalled a pupil of Professor Ude in his department of science. Conversation had commenced its easy flow—several courses had passed from the cloth, wine had plentifully flowed, and all parties seemed in the height of humorous enjoyment, when the hall bell loudly rung, and the sound of a wheeled vehicle was heard at the entrance of the mansion. The superb chandelier was now lighted overhead, while the drawn curtains excluded the view from without. A sound of voices, as if in debate, was heard in the area; and the voice of the head waiter audibly to say: "They are at dinner, and cannot now be seen." But notwithstanding the remonstrance, which became more terrific, into the dining-room walked Mrs. Jonson, with her handbox in her hand, fresh from Goosegreen. She was dressed in a stiff watered silk, trimmed with bugles, and over her squeezed up fat shoulders and bosom she had flung a bright orange colored scarf, corresponding with the same hue of her bonnet, which sat high up on her head. Her good-humored face was adorned with a new frisette, and altogether with the smart band-box, she looked like what she was, Mrs. Jonson, the Goosegreen milliner. The guests were all too well-bred to stare, or to seem shocked by this ill-timed intrusion, though Mr. Clarendon could ill-restrain a laugh at the Colonel's well-remembered old housekeeper. Cora's emotions were of mingled dismay and bewilderment, for she knew the mortification that her appearance would cause her father. At first she dared not look at him, but when she had the courage to do so, she saw that he had dropped his knife and fork like one paralyzed. But Mrs. Jonson was likely to restore his sensibility. Without embarrassment, she seated herself in a conspicuous rocking-chair, and after throwing her head back, said:

"Well, Miss Cory, this is something like; don't stir to shake hands, or to give me a chair. I come to the city to get the fashions, and heard that you and Captain Livestone had

had a lift, and thought I'd come see how things worked ; and grand enough I see you be—don't have to pinch now, I 'spose, as you used to do at the leaky old cottage. This ain't much either like Goosegreen, is it, Miss Cory?—he ! he ! Lord, how they missed you after you and the Captain left Widow Smith's"——

"Madam !" the Colonel thundered the second time, "leave"——

"Didn't miss the Captain so much," went on Mrs. Jonson, not heeding the Colonel. "By the way, where's that spruce young man that came to see you there ? The gals all fell in love with him in Goosegreen. I shall tell all the folks how grand you've grown. Lord, where did you get such a sight of silver"——

"Turn this woman"——vociferated the Colonel, while even the polished guests could scarcely restrain their mirth, notwithstanding their sympathy for their agitated host.

"There's no need o' turning me," put in the lady milliner, "I've upset arrangements afore."

"But, Mrs. Jonson," said Cora, with dignity, "if you will retire now"——

"Oh, no, I am not the least tired. Came all the way in Farmer Smith's wagon—first-rate team—just as lieves wait till you've all done, seeing as you've got company—though I ain't used to second tables, now."

"Perhaps you would like to go over the grounds," interposed Mr. Clarendon.

"I've seen you before," laughed out the old housekeeper. "Many a time, when you was sparking Miss Cora. Lord ! didn't I see through a millstone ; but I see you have got a woman now, and a plaguy pretty one, too. I've got a bonnet in my shop that would make her look like a daisy."

There were others now in trouble, besides the Colonel. Mr. Clarendon's love affair with Cora was fully published, and three persons made as uncomfortable by it, as anything could well occasion them. But Mrs. Jonson, by this time, had found out that there was an Englishman at the table, and with her arms a-kimbo, rose up and screamed out :

"Well, if I hain't got something to tell of when I go back to Goosegreen—a real live lord ! I didn't believe it when the blamed nigger tried to keep me out."

But Mrs. Jonson's voice was heard no more. The head

waiter had been now personally insulted—he saw the dismay the woman had occasioned, and gave a wink to the footmen, who approached the intruder on each side, seized her portly figure, and before she had time to resist, the Goosegreen milliner found herself at the gate of the avenue, while her band-box followed her, kicked out by the remaining waiter, caps and ribbons strewing the avenue. She did not return, and composure, after a great effort, was restored at the dinner-party.

Still the deepened rose on the cheek of Cora, and the paler shade that Flora's face assumed, showed that other feelings had been aroused besides those of mortified pride.

The Colonel endeavored to recover himself—he wished to frame an apology, but could only utter :

"This woman is an old discharged servant, and for purposes of revenge, she has committed this outrage."

"Don't let the disturbance annoy you, my dear sir," said Mr. Dethwaite, "on our account."

"Not in the least," said his sister, with a smile.

"Quite an amusing episode," said Mr. Clarendon.

"What did she say she was ; a green goose, Cora dear ?" said aunt Livingston. "What did she refer to ?"

"To Goosegreen," said Cora, frankly. "The name of a village where we lived a short time."

"Travelling, dear ? I suppose."

The Colonel looked imploringly at Cora. But she could not see herself disgraced by her brief residence in an obscure village, and said :

"No, aunt, we made it our home while in this poetically named village, in the same place where this woman lives in the capacity of a milliner."

"A good explanation," said Mr. Dethwaite, with a smile, delighted with Cora's ingenuousness, "and so, as a natural consequence from jealousy, she has come to insult you, in a different situation. Such is poor human nature. It is, after all, the degree, or want of philosophy required in such *contre-temps* that makes up the amount of evil done in the matter."

"I dare say that she may be, in her place, a very good sort of a woman," said Miss Dethwaite.

"Yes," said Cora, laughing, "for a coarse specimen she is, and feels her elevation as much from the situation of a servant to a milliner, as others do in the higher grades of society."

The Colonel could not as easily recover himself ; he was as silent as Flora, during the dessert. Serenity was at last restored, and an unusual effort made by Cora and Mr. Clarendon to dissipate from the remembrance of the party, the ridiculous and disagreeable interruption to their enjoyment.

All but the Colonel and Mrs. Clarendon, seemed to recover their agreeable powers ; but the former had had a blow to his pride, from which he could not easily recover ; and poor Flora was absorbed in the thought that her husband had once been a suitor of Cora Livingston. Here was no art, no seductive vice to combat, but the innocence and purity of a young girl, whom it seemed to her, impossible not to love. As she looked at the lovely girl, now radiant with recovered animation, she wondered that she had not before thought her irresistible. "Why, then," she asked herself, "had her husband not won and married her, instead of herself, a poor girl, without birth or connections ? Had she refused him ?" Her pride, as well as adoration of her husband, forbade the thought.

After leaving the dining-room, the party amused themselves in the parlors, save Flora, who proposed to Cora to walk with her on the avenue. The latter consented, and the two former rivals were locked arm in arm in close conversation. The frankness and ingenuousness of Flora forbade concealment of the thoughts that disturbed her, and after pacing the walk several times, she said to Cora :

"Will you tell me?—did the woman speak truly ? Did my husband ever love you, Cora ?"

"I can answer you, my dear Mrs. Clarendon, truthfully, and tell you that I know that he never did ; but I will not deceive you, there was a time when he, perhaps, thought he loved me."

"And had forgotten me ? Oh, this is foolish, but I do not like to believe it."

"Nor do believe it, my Flora," said the husband, coming upon the strollers from a side path, "but you will remember that there was a time when we were widely separated. Cora, was it not so ?"

"I knew," said Cora, with a bright blush, "that he had never a whole heart to offer me ; and I was sure that another had my own."

"And you love another, as I do my husband," said the fond, artless wife, clinging confidently to the arm offered her.

"I do, my dear friend, and this is why I am so frank with you. Let the words of this coarse woman pass from your thoughts, and remember that when I shared your husband's gallantry with others, like a bewildered traveller, he had lost his guiding star."

"Thank you," said Mr. Clarendon. "I ought to have saved this wound, for I confess, even before my wife, to the magic of all loveliness."

"I should be sorry if you did not appreciate our Cora," said Flora affectionately.

"And are not jealous now?" queried the husband.

"I can never be jealous," replied Flora, proudly; "never fear that—but my faith in my husband must be whole."

The strollers, after wandering over the grounds, returned to the house, and in a short time left for their own homes. The dinner party had been a delightful one to all but the Colonel; and his enjoyment had received a blow from which it would take him long to recover. "For what," he thought to himself, "had he assembled at his elegant mansion so select a circle? For what but to gratify his pride, and to reflect honor upon himself as one of a distinguished name. Why had he taken pains to exhibit his ancestral possessions, but to show his consequence, and position, and how by the ill-will and revenge of a low-bred woman, had his former circumstances been exhibited, and his recent poverty exposed."

Petty as was this annoyance, it served to embitter the mind of the arrogant and courtly host, and to make him feel that, like a farce, his family standing and position had been represented. He considered himself disgraced and fallen. The veil of splendor which had been to-day cast over his fortunes, had been torn aside, and the naked truth of the past been laid before those to whom he had been ambitious to represent himself, as one of the few that could boast in America a local habitation and a name. But now with what were both associated? With the humblest of homes, and worse, with an abiding residence in an obscure village, bearing so rustic a name—Colonel Livingston, of Goosegreen! Such he had been represented, and as one who had risen like a mushroom, in a night, to wealth and luxury.

The dinner had vanished, with all its splendor; the old-fashioned chairs, with their antique backs, had been metamorphosed to wooden-bottomed seats; the crested silver, bearing

his name, had changed to the widow's blue crockery. On his vision, too, came the baked custards, in the good woman's burnt cups; and the slanting pile of feathers, on which he had dreamed of his present good fortune. He was again in the whitewashed chamber—the splendid mirror before him had changed to the little crooked glass, with its asparagus adornment. He saw nothing before him now but Goosegreen, and its hateful milliner.

Thus was the noble nature of Edward Livingston overshadowed by one mighty failing—the pride that obscured his virtues, and spread like a mantle over a character of original brightness. Born, as he veritably was, of a noble stock, heir to a name as good as his native land can boast—a name distinguished alike for high breeding, virtue, and talent, still he had not sufficient greatness of soul to show the hero under circumstances that could not degrade the man, however much they might reduce his purse. How unlike was the spirit he manifested to that of his noble-hearted child—who, under all circumstances, and all afflictions, under all the humiliating incidents to their lot, and more with the sudden accession to great wealth, had preserved her humility of character without the loss of self-respect.

She saw herself as but an atom in the great universe, and like the humblest of God's creatures, on the passage to the same bourne where all ranks are levelled, and all pride is brought low. She had long since deplored her father's adoration of wealth and high station, and to see its utter worthlessness to bring happiness to the heart that craves its honors and pleasures as its food.

Cora sought her parent after the departure of their guests, and grieved to see how trifling an event had demolished his day's happiness—and more, to feel that his old enemy still held him in his grasp. Too proud to own his discomfiture, even to his daughter, the Colonel roused from his mood of irritability, and vented spitefully upon his foot and his "blockheaded physicians," the spleen and mortification that he would not have confessed to his dog.

That he was really afflicted in body and mind Cora knew, and her tears of sympathy fell in secret for her suffering parent, who had founded his happiness for a long life, on so chimerical a basis, which, although his hopes had been realized, proved so futile a source of joy.

She contrasted the peaceful life that they had led at Villacora, the competence upon which they were sustained in her early years, and the regularity and quiet of their home, which preserved the health of his body, and, in a comparative degree, brought tranquillity to his mind, with the unhealthy excitement, the cares, and responsibilities of his present position, and looked at the result. What did she now see in his situation to compensate for what he had lost? The greater part of a life sacrificed in anticipation, and the remainder blasted by wounded pride, and disappointment, in failing to realize to the fullest extent of his wishes, the joys of wealth and position. It is true he had the homage that is paid to the rich, and Edward Livingston graciously welcomed his flatterers to his hospitable board; but could he in secret fail to remember, that when he was poor he was deserted by them? Could he fail to see that many that now seemed to worship and admire his beautiful daughter, had been hitherto regardless of the little wood-flower that had so suddenly bloomed into the perfection of loveliness? No, in the private chambers of his heart these convictions rankled, and here he rightly estimated the homage paid to the rich, and the value of such friendship as is based on worldly pelf. And yet such is human nature, that with the weathercock of fortune also change both eddying currents. The shifting of the vane does not alone affect the parasite who fawns: the suddenly rich as readily receive their new worshipers, but in secret they appreciate them in all their hollowness, and, like "whited sepulchres," they view their summer friends, that they now feed, but who once passed them coldly by. Cora's efforts proved unavailing to-night to soothe her father, so she retired to her chamber, where her mind roved as well as her parent's from the splendor and display which had so dazzled their eyes; but hers went over hill and dale, with a swift and joyous bound, to the little log hut in Virginia.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It lay upon its mother's breast, a thing
Bright as a dew drop, when it first descends,
Or as the plumage of an angel's wing,
Where every tint of rainbow-beauty blends.

Mrs. WEST.

THE "silver cage," as Benson calls Flora's pretty chamber, is now veiled in a softer light ; for a tiny warbler is there with unfledged wings, and its young mother calls it her "bird," her "little nestling," as it lies hushed, a beautiful thing, in her bosom. Her delicate fingers lie caressingly among its fleecy curls, while her eyes rest with rapture upon the velvet lips, and soft cheek of her new darling.

She is never wearied looking at her baby, and wonders and grieves that its father has not come to welcome it, such a "dear little puss as it is."

How new and thrilling are her sensations ! with what wonder, and delight, she feels that the little one in her arms, is all her own, and how much dearer in this hour, has he become who will claim the precious treasure alike with herself ! How full of love and gratitude her heart is filled, and how fervently goes up to Heaven her thanks that she has lived to clasp to her beating heart, this last sweet gift of God.

But the husband and father is ignorant of his wife's happiness, and is laggard in returning homeward. As he turned a corner, a carriage drove up close to the sidewalk, on which he was passing when a lady spoke from the window, and beckoned to him.

"You must excuse me," said Mr. Clarendon, approaching her, and taking the proffered hand of the lady. "I am in haste."

"Ah ! but one moment !" The lady spoke beseechingly. "I have something to say to you." The hand of Madame

Delano now rested on the arm of her old admirer. "You owe it to me—Clarendon. You are bound by the honor of a gentleman to make me some reparation for the injury done me."

"Pardon me, but now"—

"But what I would say, is important." The lady still clung to the arm that rested upon the carriage.

"You are looking, as well as I can see, very gay and lovely—bound to some party, I suppose—to-night?"

"Come inside one moment, I will not detain you, and will drop you nearer home."

"Well," said the gentleman, looking around him, opening and then closing the door of the vehicle, while he seated himself by the side of the lady.

"Now drop the curtain, for I must speak to you—if it is for the last time."

"Be quick, then, Eugenie. You must be aware that I am imprudent in this."

"Pshaw! your lady-bird is a prisoner now; and you are at liberty, thank Heaven. I have not seen you since the night I experienced her superb hospitality; and witnessed the courage and gallantry of her very dutiful husband."

"Is this to be the tone and import of your very important intelligence?" said Mr. Clarendon, impatiently.

"No, this is not all." The lady's voice became softer, and full of wounded feeling. "Do you think that I can have nothing to say to you since our long separation? Can you, as a gentleman, and a man of honor, pass me in public, unnoticed, in the same circles where I have received your civilities and devotion? Will you, too, scorn me, as well as your insulting wife?"

"Eugenie, you are too sensitive—I cannot offend her. I have endeavored to reconcile her to you; what can I do more?"

"You can show her that you defy her tyranny. You, Clarendon, under the government of a wife! ha! ha! who would have believed it a year since? I have been outraged in your own house, by both her, and yourself; and I will have my revenge! I will mortify you both, as you have done me—but where it will cut more keenly. These lordly Dethwaites shall know the aristocratic birth and spotless reputation of your immaculate wife." A sneer curled the lip of the lady.

"Cease!" interposed Mr. Clarendon, enraged. "Regard your words."

"No—I will not, until I have been fully revenged for her insults. Unless you conform to my conditions, I will inform your English friends of all that I know; and that the daughter was but a fair sample of her virtuous mother! Do you imagine that I do not know her history? You kept, it is true, your lady mistress securely hid, but you need not think to palm her off upon the world as a gem in society. The proud, scornful"—

"Eugenie Delano—cease! I have you in my power—and if one word of slander comes from your poisonous tongue respecting my wife, I will blast your reputation till not a shred is left to carry you where you would vainly attempt to injure her."

"Do you think that I have any wish to wound or injure you?"

"As to my wife, it matters not what malice you may have at your heart; and to injure me would be an amusing undertaking." Mr. Clarendon laughed sneeringly.

"Then you acknowledge that you no longer love me, that you even hate me, notwithstanding?"—

"Eugenie, I have not said that I hated you, but I do say, that I love and venerate my wife; you traduce her, as pure as one of Heaven's angels!"

"Do you thrust her virtue in my face! I tell you that I will have my revenge; do you think that I have preserved no billet-doux of yours; do you think that 'your beloved Eugenie' has nothing by which to remember her 'devoted Clarendon?'"

"When those were penned I was not married."

"But I was, and you at the same time wooing your Hudson belle, and paying private homage to the shrine of your foreign empress. Eugenie Delano has not spent years in Paris, and New York, and become obtuse in sight or intellect."

"But you seem to have lost your Parisian tongue, and have learned to speak plain English. I will talk with you another time; I must leave you here."

"Do you wish for your letters, or shall I send them to your wife?"

"An exchange might be as well for you."

"Call for yours then, on Thursday night. I shall be at home; remember I am angry and unless you come, you will

receive them from a dearer source ; and more, I will publish to your English friends, all I know of my worst enemy." Bitterness and sarcasm breathed in the tones of the deserted favorite.

"All you can fabricate you mean. Harm my wife ! the idea is diverting ! but I cannot, pardon me, even permit you so to amuse your friends ; remember, the first word, and you shall never tread the carpet of another lady's saloon that you now visit. I will annihilate you as I would"——

"And you thus abuse me !" sobbed the lady in a hysterical passion ; "come for your letters, and I will recall my words. I cannot so easily forget the period when they were written."

"Why then, do you provoke me to threaten you ? You know that you have relied upon a gentleman, but God knows that for all the beautiful women in New York, I will not abuse the trust of my wife. The past cannot be retrieved ; I pity more than blame you ; you have made an uncongenial marriage ; you find no happiness at home, and I would advise you, for your own good. Have my letters ready when I call for them, and I will bring you yours."

With these words Mr. Clarendon stopped the carriage ; he thought of Flora, looked at his watch, and hurried onward. He had been thoroughly disgusted and irritated with the beautiful woman who had so recently fascinated and allured him, and proceeded towards home reproached and remorseful. Madame Delano, meanwhile, dried her tears, and concocted her plans for bringing mortification and ruin, if she could effect it, upon both the heads of her old lover and his haughty wife. Had she not received the scorn and neglect of the latter, she could never have forgiven his adoration of her rival.

She was fully convinced, from all well-sifted rumors, and the authority on which she willingly relied, that the independent lady of ton, was of low and illegitimate birth ; and she believed, however ill-founded might be the whispered report, that circumstances favored the circulation of a tale which sullied a reputation hardly to be redeemed by a final marriage on the part of the faithful lover. Madame Delano reached her home in an exultant frame of mind ; she believed that her hour of revenge was near at hand, and resolved that art should accomplish all that appearances failed to effect.

At the hour of ten Mr. Clarendon reached home ; messages had been sent him in every part of the city, where he was

accustomed to resort. Poor Flora, in the meanwhile, hugged her baby, and sighed and wondered where her husband was, when he had promised to return so early.

But while listening for his steps, she heard a servant say to Benson that he "was seen stepping into a carriage at seven o'clock, with a lady."

Flora was excited and nervous, and now giving up hope, uttered a faint cry, and fell back upon the pillow on which she had risen. For a while, she seemed senseless, so still and calm she reposed; but tears gushed from her eyes, she buried her head, and sobbed bitterly.

Poor Flora! she was alone with her first born, for who was there in the wide world that could now sympathize with her as her dear husband! Benson was in a rage, because Master Louis hadn't come home to see the child; and when she saw Flora's tears actually dropping, she resolved to be the first to greet him, for she knew, that no one else would give him a "piece of her mind" as she could.

Mr. Clarendon at length entered the hall-door; Benson allowed him to enter the library, where he usually first looked for Flora; then to look over the house below, and afterwards approach the stair-case to go to his chamber, before she spoke. Then arresting him, she said,

"You mustn't go up there; she's got company."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, enough without you—so you might as well go along to bed."

"You are witty, Mrs. Benson. Isn't Mrs. Clarendon well?"

"She is well enough."

"You are mysterious—where is she?"

"Well stop—don't go so fast," said Benson, holding by the coat-tail the impatient husband. "Don't go bustin' in—one would think you'd never seen a young 'un."

"Let me alone, you are enough to provoke a saint."

"Which you ain't exactly, and what's more, you oughter been here three hours ago, instead of gallivanting. Well, it's none of my business, but I hated to see her cryin' her eyes out, silly as she is."

Mr. Clarendon heard no more—he was over the staircase, and had entered his wife's chamber. Dr. Vale met him with a cordial shake of the hand, which spoke his congratulations, while in the corner of the shaded room sat a fat woman, knit-

ting a blue stocking. As yet, the father saw no signs of a baby. He had an indistinct idea of something that might be trotting or rolling about on the carpet; there was a cradle, too, which he looked at but saw nothing in it. He thought Flora might be asleep, and addressed the doctor.

"This is a surprise; but I am a philosophic individual, and prepared for all evils," said Mr. Clarendon, concealing a smile.

"This is Mrs. Quackenboss, Mr. Clarendon," added the Doctor.

Mr. Clarendon bowed to the Quackenboss and blue stocking, and sat down by the doctor.

Flora heard the whispering, and manifested her satisfaction. The next moment the face of the delighted father was drawn towards the pale, tearful cheek that he kissed with tender emotion. Flora felt that her husband was as happy as herself, and she cried while she hid her face, but her tears were those of joy.

"He is such a dear little thing?" said the young mother.

"Won't it cry?"

"It's eyes are so beautiful!"

"The mouse! Hold him up. Bring a light, nurse, I want a look at this boy."

"If you please," said the corpulence in the corner, "I can't allow any light there, nor the babe unrolled—put it in the feathers, I always keep 'em under 'em a month."

"And the next under ground, I suppose. Pull him up, Flora."

Out came the boy, half-smothered, and full of grimaces. Mr. Clarendon felt doubtful about appropriating either of the varied expressions of the new comer to himself. Still there was a twinkling that made him feel assured of a pair of eyes; and as to a mouth, the sounds that issued from it, were convincing proof of that important organ.

"Will it ever stop making wry faces? What do you call it?"

"Louis."

At this moment Benson peeped under the curtain, and seeing the situation of the family group, pulled out a red handkerchief, and blew her nose from excess of sensibility. At this moment, Mr. Clarendon experienced the sharp prick of her sharp elbow, while she signified that he must go. But a more consequential movement was soon made. Mrs. Quackenboss was on her way.

"It's time to shut up, now," said the fat lady, in an authoritative tone; "you have had talk enough—thousands of it. I suppose there's plenty of tea made, and I shouldn't care if we had a wing of a chicken, to-night. You'll see to this, house-keeper. I sleeps late, and doesn't do anything but see that the baby"—

"Breathes," interposed Mr. Clarendon, retreating.

Flora was soon left with her rolled up bundle of a baby, and made much happier by her husband's visit, which "big Benson," as Flora called her, declared was the saving of her.

Mrs. Quackenboss bolted the door after Mr. Clarendon, while she muttered something about "men around;" which sounds came from under such fat developments, that they were scarcely audible.

A few days after the excitement of the present occasion had subsided, Mr. Clarendon received a note from a hotel in the city, containing the card of Mrs. Linden, for Flora. He immediately called upon the lady, delighted with the opportunity to show his respect for one to whom he owed so much. He found her looking well and happy. She still dressed in weeds, with her usual elegance and simplicity. Her reception of Mr. Clarendon was full of feeling, while her fervent expressions of love for his wife betrayed her former affection for her beloved pupil.

Their conversation for the first time, in their long acquaintance, was free from restraint. Mr. Clarendon delighted Mrs. Linden with an account of the events which had transpired since they had met. In return, Mrs. Linden disclosed to her auditor a part of her interesting history, whereby she identified herself with the long absent wife of Roger Wilton, and the mother of his deserted son. She was to him, indeed, a heroine, and still a mystery.

With deep interest he looked upon her pale, handsome face, upon the features so full of benevolence and care-worn beauty—and asked himself what was the history that had caused the world to wonder, and that so strongly made its impress upon the early life of Colonel Livingston. His manner evinced the contrition of which he would not speak, and gratitude for her enduring interest in his wife. With tears of joy his kindness and courtesy were accepted, while she hastened to the home of her beloved Flora, from which she had once torn her in sorrow, to find her now a happy wife and mother.

Mrs. Linden had arrived from Virginia with her son, who had already proceeded to the home of Cora, leaving her to seek that of her old beloved pupil.

With outstretched arms, the once sorrowing friends met ! How differently had they parted ! One, in the wildness of insanity, and the other to undergo the greatest trial of her sad life. And now, how had the virtue and fortitude of each been rewarded ? God had surely been in all their paths. On each shone the beauty that arises from a pure, unerring conscience, and that peace which ever illumines the face of the true Christian. And how precious to each was that little one ! Like a mother, Mrs. Linden had ever been in heart to her beloved Flora, and as dear as one of her own blood, seemed now the sweet child that lay in her bosom. To Flora she, for the first time, told the history of her sad life, reserving only to herself the name of her early lover. To this confession, Mr. Clarendon was also admitted ; while, evening after evening, she entertained the young mother with new chapters of her life ; and so thrilling and interesting the narrations continued, that her listeners sorrowed at their termination, with the same feeling that one regrets the end of a fascinating tale. It had been such a history as no novelist could relate ; it required the tongue made eloquent by the feeling which gave it inspiration, and derived its chief charm from the character and genius of its heroine.

The visit of Mrs. Linden to Flora had been to her very sweet and comforting. She felt that she once more had a mother, one too, who came at a welcome time.

But the world has its partings as well as its greetings ; and that of Flora and Mrs. Linden was one of hope and joy. Not a shadow had passed over the sunshine of their happy meeting ; and they parted from each other with the prospect of a happy reunion.

Flora's recovery was slow, and her husband became wearied with her long illness ; and vexed with the crying of an infant that seemed to have no reasonable complaint. He ascribed all its fretfulness to its early smothering—consequently vented untold anathemas upon all Quackenbosses. The child, he said, was trotted to death. And so between the women and cross baby, the husband pretty much abandoned the nursery, much to the relief of the lady nurse, though not without sadness to Flora. She daily saw less of her husband ; a brief visit, con-

stituting the length of his interview. The bug-bear, Benson, became her great stay and comfort; familiarized to her rough ways, she began to appreciate her real goodness of heart.

The old servant looked with secret anxiety upon Flora's pale face, and declining health, and began to grow "mad" that her master did not see it as plainly as she did. But he himself had serious fears for his wife, and after a consultation with Dr. Vale, concluded to send her into the country for the summer—Villacora was at last chosen for their retreat. The beautiful spring months had passed, and summer was near upon them. The Colonel and Cora were delighted with the proposed arrangement, and as the Dethwaites had promised to become a part of their household, Mr. Clarendon hoped that with country air, and good company, Flora would soon be restored. She was now so feeble as to be almost passive in the inclination she exhibited, and consented to her husband's wishes without opposition.

The agreement which he had made to call upon Madame Delano, for the exchange of their letters, slipped from his mind in the excitement of the period; and week after week passed away, without its fulfillment. Finally, fearing the result of annoyance from her, during the delicate health of his wife, he resolved to arrange matters with her as well as he could.

A glance at the home of Madame, will be essential to follow the subsequent history of one whose acquaintance with her, has involved Mr. Clarendon in embarrassment.

Her home was as fanciful as its mistress. A subdued light lent a mysterious charm to the beauty of her apartment—even the lapdog that lay at her feet wore a jewelled collar, and reposed on a cushion of crimson damask.

The goddess of the Epicurean temple, sat richly dressed opposite an open window shaded with flowers. But doll as she was, no smile wreathed her bright lips, or lighted her dark eyes. She had daily become more exasperated with the neglect of her old lover, and indignant with his failure to fulfill his promise. His letters, she had resolved never to relinquish, without the accomplishment of her designs. She had arrayed herself day after day, with the hope of seeing him, resolving to perfect her plans, and to revenge herself speedily, should he fail entirely to comply with her terms of reconciliation.

She sat alone, but hearing a step in the corridor, smoothed

her brow, and assumed her blandest smiles, when her husband, whom she termed "*Le Capitaine*," entered her saloon. Had a Greenland bear come with his huge paws into her delicate presence, she could scarcely have been more shocked, for she and her sailor spouse seldom met. He allowed his fanciful wife unlimited control of his purse, but disturbed her little with his company, regarding her as one would a bird of Paradise made of blown glass, for ornament, rather than answering any useful or entertaining purpose; he was generally submissive under her dominion, but occasionally fits of rebellion would seize him, when her enormous bills were presented him, and he seriously estimated the compensation received for supporting a beauty and her dog, that excluded him from their French establishment.

He had just paid an enormous sum for a collar for the poodle, also for medical attendance on the lady's pet; and being in an unusual state of excitement, determined to try the effect of expostulation upon Madame. Captain Delano was a portly man, with a weather-beaten visage, and much more at home on a ship's deck than in one of his wife's fairy boudoirs, and now as he strode, with his heavy boots, over her brilliant carpet, and seated himself, upon a sky-blue ottoman, Madame lifted her jewelled arms, and gave a prolonged shriek, with the cry, "*Mon Dieu ! mon fauteuil !*"

"Look here, Jinny," said the Captain, "I've come to talk English. Do you know what this cabin cost? without a cheer or a settle to hold up a common sized man." The blue ottoman fearfully creaked. "What are these red sails for? to shut out light? and these smells—I'll be blown if I don't like bilge water better; and this bed of posies," continued the honest tar, as he flung himself at full length, and rested his boots on the arm of a rose satin couch, on which flowers were embroidered—"is this a good sort of hammock—or is it made for dogs and dandies?—and this smoke out of a Kangaroo's head, is this to light a land lubber's cigar?"

"*Ah ! pour l'amour de Dieu ! prenez garde de ma pastille !*"

"Your pastor, is it? He belongs to the brimstone order, I guess. Seems to me, if I was a decent woman, I'd dress up this squad of plaster people—they look to me like sea-islanders as they come out of a pond—those shiny black fellows. The white ones I'd take for ghosts in a dark night. Hain't you got any rigging for that woman?"

Madame groaned, and fell backward, with a bottle at her nose.

The Captain now began to feel more at home, and approached a frail article of upholstery, made of pearl and satin-wood ; an ornament rather than for use. He pulled aside the skirts of his coat, and squared himself to fall upon it. His wife gave a scream, the poodle barked, but all in vain ; down the Captain sat—crash went the framework, sending the sailor over backwards against a costly India caspador, which fell against a beautiful statue of Venus, breaking both into a hundred fragments. In the same scene of destruction, vases, flowers, perfumery and incense all were involved.

The Captain was soon on his legs, one of which he employed in kicking the dog, who had given him a sharp bite on the ear, sending the pet into a Flora saucer, upsetting the water and flowers into the lap of the incensed beauty.

Affectation now deserted her. She stormed, screamed, and threatened suicide.

The Captain coolly looked upon the scene of disaster, while he exclaimed :

"By St. Joseph, we have swept the decks, but saved the crew !"

At this critical moment Mr. Clarendon entered the presence of the ill-mated couple. Madame's rage now turned to faintness, and she sank in an apparent swoon on the lounge.

While the lady feigned unconsciousness, Mr. Clarendon took the opportunity of securing to himself a small package, that fell from a rosewood escritoire that had been burst open by the general smash. His letters he feared would cost him much trouble to procure. He put them into his pocket unseen, and as her husband had vanished, he addressed the lady.

"Eugenie," said he, "I am here at last, and trust that you are well enough to fulfill your promise."

The lady opened her beautiful eyes, and with sweetness of accent, said : "You see what I suffer by the tyranny of my infamous husband. See around me what his violent passion has done, and here I lie a vietim to his terrible temper. Oh, Clarendon, it is indeed happiness to see you." The tapering fingers of the lady were now reached out for the clasp of her old admirer, but they fell on a broken vase.

"I have called to-day on business," said Mr. Clarendon, coldy. "Are you ready to restore my letters ?"

"Yes—when you promise me, on the word of a gentleman, that you will introduce me, in the presence of your wife, to your English friends ; and compel your haughty lady to change her supercilious manners towards me."

"What if I refuse, Madame Delano ?"

"I will enclose, by a sure hand, your letters to me, to your wife ; and more than this, I will inform these English people of such matters of your family history, as you would rather have concealed. This is not all ; I will effect your wife's ruin ; I will injure her as she has tried to crush me. I can do it ; and you may now choose whether to gratify my ambition, or to humor your base-born wife."

"Eugenie Delano, these letters I prefer to show to my wife myself ; and yours, if you choose, you can show your husband. I make the exchange"——

"Villain ! you have broken my escritoire."

"No ; a domestic storm has done that ; but it is an 'ill-wind that blows no good.' Do your worst in attempting to injure my wife."

A frown of intense hatred clouded the late serene brow of the admired belle. Her eyes flashed fire and vengeance. Mr. Clarendon waited for no words, but left the beautiful, unprincipled woman, whom he now despised as heartily as he had once admired.

Louis Clarendon returned to his home a happier man. He resolved to acquaint his wife with his morning's visit ; and of all the circumstances that had then transpired. But he found her pale and dejected—and feared to agitate her by the disclosure ; little dreaming that by a secret hand—both his ride, and visit had already been imparted to Flora.

He attributed her low spirits to her ill health, and the fatigue of her child ; and feeling so fully conscious of no intended wrong, he troubled himself little about the appearances against him. He returned home, in unusual spirits ; and was grieved and wounded that his proffered kiss was so coldly received : and that she expressed no word of regret at the prospect of separation from him.

Flora's manner seemed to him unaccountably proud, and indifferent. Illness he believed the cause of it all ; and he the more urgently proposed her immediate departure for the country.

"I am ready," said she, coldly, "there is nothing to keep me now."

"You mean that your wardrobe is prepared my love?"

"I mean that I am in every way, prepared."

"And, without one regret, my darling?"

"Yes," said Flora, choking down the sobs that rose like leaden weights in her throat.

"I shall see you very often, Flora—and shall feel very anxious for you, and little Louis."

Mr. Clarendon then left the room. The eyes of the wife were now veiled, and fell on the carpet. She dared not look up, lest she should shriek with anguish. She turned away and made her last preparations to go. While about her chamber, she took from a chair, a coat which her husband had thrown aside. As she lifted it, a package fell from it. It was tied with a fanciful ribbon, and superscribed in a lady's hand. "To Eugenie—from Clarendon."

With a shudder, she replaced the package; and while the blood rushed to her heart, fell half lifeless upon her bed. At this moment, her husband entered the chamber; he put away the garment with its contents; and then approached Flora.

"My love," said he, "it pains me to have you leave me so miserable in health and spirits."

She made no reply; but averted her face, and shuddered.

"Where is the child?"

"With his nurse," replied Flora.

"I have not seen you caress him to-day."

"When will the carriage come?" said she.

"Not until after dinner. I will go with you. The servants will have everything comfortable at the cottage; but, Flora, all will be desolate here."

How those words wrung her heart! how they froze her veins with anguish! for were they not framed by deceit? So she then deemed, for she believed that her husband had been, since her illness, a visitor at Madame Delano's; while torturing her with his late neglect; but now, she was going away; and in the joy of his heart, he had endeavored to cheat her with his old fondness! Bitter was the suffering she endured under the conviction of his duplicity and apparent treachery.

And so poor Flora went away, without a tear. They found Villacora blooming and beautiful, and Cora and the Colonel there to welcome them.

The latter was much shocked to see the pallor, and observe the dejection of Flora—but, like her husband, believed that the change would restore her to health. After vainly endeavoring to draw one smile, or one kind word from his wife, Mr. Clarendon left her, almost as wretched as herself.

When he next sought his office in town, he found Mr. Dethwaite awaiting him, to confer upon the matter which brought him to America. But since he last saw him, a change had occurred in the friendliness of his manner, and he was very much surprised to hear him express his determination to decline the invitation to pass the summer months at Villacora.

Mr. Clarendon bowed coldly, but asked no explanation; Mr. Dethwaite then proceeded to business.

"The search I have to make," said the latter, "is for the child of a deceased brother, who came to America under peculiar circumstances. I have information both from him and from one who saw his wife after she arrived, that she lived in this city, with her child. I have sought the place to which I was directed by my brother, but all the intelligence I can gain, is, that a woman answering the description died there years ago; and that the child was carried away. I will explain the circumstances, that led to such singular events in the life of an English nobleman. My eldest brother was betrothed from a child to his cousin, an heiress to great wealth. The engagement, after he grew up, became repugnant to him; still, he dared not release himself from his bonds. He travelled over the continent, and while journeying was captivated by an Italian girl, of great beauty, and extraordinary musical powers. She was well connected, and returned his attachment as ardently. I saw that his heart was enthralled, and being myself interested in his cousin, I encouraged him in marrying the foreigner privately; promising myself to keep his secret from reaching England, until I could win from him his affianced bride. She was then very young, and no objection was made to the delay proposed, so that he spent much of his time in Italy without suspicion, and finally came to America with his wife and child."

"But while here, I wrote him, that the time had come when he must declare his marriage; and proceed to England to

make the declaration, as I had already supplanted him in the favor of his neglected cousin. His wife had never been aware of his previous engagement, and had suffered much unhappiness from the privacy of her marriage, though when he left her, she supposed it was for another purpose. But my poor brother died from a fever taken on his passage, and on his arrival, we could never learn the situation of his wife or child. The difficulty probably arose from his having assumed another name; which I never heard, but which may be revealed among his letters to her, could I find them."

"This is certainly a singular history," said Mr. Clarendon, while sudden light broke upon him. "I do not know how I can assist you, unless through a physician, who attended a lady in her last illness, who died under mysterious circumstances. She made revelations to him, I understand, respecting them. I will send for him."

After further conversation, Dr. Vale was summoned, and informed privately by Mr. Clarendon, that he had sent for him to make the confessions of Mrs. Islington, now known to Mr. Dethwaite, in his presence, without disclosing his wife's identity with the daughter.

"I will do so," said Doctor Vale, "if such is your wish. The physician's disclosure was as follows: "A Mrs. Islington, living in this city, ten years since, stated to me, on her death-bed, that she had believed herself the wife of Robert Dethwaite, of the North of England; and that a doubt of her legal marriage never had harassed her mind, until she received a letter from Italy, informing her that she had been deluded by a false ceremony; and that her husband was now on his way to fulfill a contract made with his cousin, an English heiress.

"She told me, also, that the news had been the cause of her death; and that since her husband's desertion of her, she had credited the rumor; but she implored me never to reveal her secret, unless under circumstances advantageous to her daughter, or at the request of her husband, should she marry."

"This lady was," said Mr. Dethwaite, with agitation, "none other than the lawful wife of my deceased brother. I was present at her marriage, and have now the certificate, which I found among my brother's papers. She died then? poor Isora! and what became of her child?"

Mr. Clarendon's eye pleaded discretion from the Doctor, who briefly answered, "She was adopted by a stranger."

"And no one knows her fate, I suppose?"

"Why do you wish to ascertain it?"

"That she may be restored to her kindred, and come into possession of her estates," said Mr. Dethwaite.

"I will assist you, my dear sir," said the Doctor, "and perhaps we may be successful in the search."

The Doctor left the gentlemen, when Mr. Dethwaite said, haughtily, to Mr. Clarendon, "Facts have been revealed to me concerning your domestic history, which have shocked and surprised me; and although they have not prevented me from seeking your counsel, they must forbid me or my family visiting you or your wife. I could not have believed the disclosure, privately and anonymously made me, but from the mystery which seems by yourself and others attached to Mrs. Clarendon's birth and history. I have invited you both to visit us in England. I must now recall that invitation."

Mr. Clarendon turned coldly, "We will then, sir, proceed to business, if the courtesies of life are at an end between us."

"Certainly, sir; your private life cannot affect such matters, but I must express my indignation, that you should have thus mistaken me, or the lady under my charge."

"From whom, sir, did you receive your direct intelligence?" said Mr. Clarendon.

"Here is the note; information confirmed, by your own silence."

"Stop, sir; we may be able to exhibit some testimony, which will throw light upon the character of your informant. Here is a note in the same handwriting."

Mr. Dethwaite read the following:—

"Unless you repair the injury your wife has done me, I will ruin her character, and blast it for ever with Mr. Dethwaite and his family."

"EUGENIE DELANO."

Mr. Clarendon continued:—"This note was pencilled, and handed me the day after the party which you attended at my house. I acknowledge myself, once to have been an admirer of this unprincipled woman, but the loveliness and virtue of my wife, has entirely obscured in my eyes the attractions of one so worthless. And now, as you have obligingly opened this subject, I will tell you something of Mrs. Clarendon's history; though I do not feel bound to disclose all the peccadilloes of

my own. She was an orphan, when I married her ; her birth was unknown to me. I adopted, educated, and took her to my home, then a child. I afterwards loved her, but made her no proposal of marriage ; she subsequently fled from me, preferring poverty and an obscure home, to a dangerous intimacy with a lover, too proud to wed her. I afterwards conquered that pride ; and have been since rewarded in my choice by her devotion, and furthermore, however you may spurn my wife, I wish you to understand, that I hold the honor, as much conferred, as received, in the mutual acquaintance of our families."

"Pardon me, my dear sir," said Mr. Dethwaite, agitated and overwhelmed. "Who was your wife ? Her name ?"

"Flora Islington."

"And her mother's ?"

"Isora Giocanti."

"My brother's child ! God bless you ! God bless you !"

Mr. Dethwaite clasped the hand of Mr. Clarendon, and almost wrung it in his gratitude and joy.

"And you saved her from poverty and ruin, educated and married her ?"

"I did, but I was actuated by selfish motives ; benevolence had little to do with my course. When a little child I fancied I had before seen her. Was she ever at Rome with her father ?"

"Yes, and there he had her picture taken ; it now hangs in my gallery at home."

"How is the child dressed in the painting ?"

"With an infant's slip, with coral clasps."

"The same," murmured Mr. Clarendon ; "Flora was right ; she remembered me truly ; the child's ornaments were unlike any I had before seen ; I saw her on my tour abroad with my mother."

"And this little idol of my brother—the orphan one, is now your wife ? A strange, remarkable Providence. Come with me: my sister must know this. How often she has spoken of the little cross worn by your wife, so like one given her by my brother. Oh, we must both go instantly to the dear child."

"No, stop, my dear sir, await my time ; acquaint your sister with all you have learned, and bid her shun, as a viper, the vile woman who has traduced her noble, virtuous relative ; my wife's health is now so delicate I fear that she cannot bear the excitement of the news awaiting her."

"I will be governed by you, Mr. Clarendon ; my object in coming to America is accomplished. Adieu !"

The gentlemen parted, to meet under other circumstances.

CHAPTER XXXII.

*There is a kind of mournful eloquence
In thy dumb grief, that shames all clamorous sorrow.*

NAT LEE.

THE following day, Flora sat in Cora's old seat, on the piazza of the cottage at Villacora. Her baby had already improved, and was fast progressing in beauty and intelligence. Flora often caressed it, but with none of her old joyousness. On her lap now lies a letter which she views indifferently, and turns to one of her husband's on which superscription she fixes her eyes, with a cheek of ashy paleness, and places it unopened in her escritoire. Another is in her clasp ; it was written in the same hand that acquainted her with her husband's devotion to Madame Delano. While faintness crept over her, she read the intelligence, that Mr. Dethwaite and his sister had been informed of the circumstances of her birth, and of her own doubtful reputation previous to her marriage ; and that consequently she need not be surprised to find the acquaintance between herself and her English friends dropped.

Scornfully Flora discarded the letter, and broke open an envelope directed in the handwriting of Miss Dethwaite. It simply contained a cold refusal to accept the invitation, extended to herself and brother, to visit Villacora. Flora instantly imagined the source of the disaffection, and of the malice which had caused the alienation of her valued friends ; and wished that she had no better proof of the unfaithfulness of her husband than the assertions of her enemy. But had she not known of his ride with, and visit to Madame Delano ? had she not seen also the package of letters which he had secreted from her ? and more, had she not witnessed his eagerness to have her depart from him ? and ah, was the conviction not too plain to her heart that he wished her away, that he might more securely enjoy the society of one she despised ?

And still no word of suspicion had passed her lips ; she determined to bury in her heart her grief ; trusting to the performance of her duties, for peace of mind. Her husband came often to see her, but returned to town gloomy and dispirited. He greatly feared the approach of her old malady, so totally had his darling; joyous Flora changed. He again placed her under the charge of Doctor Vale, and with anguish of mind witnessed her increasing depression.

Little Louis, meanwhile, grew daily more lovely and interesting. He soon became an idol with his father, while Flora seemed to concentrate in her worship of him all that she had once bestowed upon her husband. In her darling's existence, she seemed to live—to breathe. She asked no question respecting their English friends, and as her husband knew nothing of the letter which she had received concerning their desertion of her, he presumed her as indifferent to them as to others, and was afraid in her present state of mind, to impart to her her relationship to them ; while she thought, if they could so readily be made to think ill of her, that she would not refute the slander. Doctor Vale enjoined her to observe perfect quiet, and was puzzled much to account for her state of mind.

The summer months were now fairly upon them. Mr. Clarendon had enjoyed a tranquil day at Villacora. Flora had seemed less to avoid him, and had played with little Louis, while he sat upon his knee. He had dwelt upon her pale sweet face with more than his usual fondness ; and, for the first time for many weeks, she had permitted him to smooth caressingly her hair. Still her eyes were ever averted from his ; her hand even shrunk from his touch, while all her love seemed wrapped in the little being on which her thoughts were fixed. She had taught the child to lie across her shoulder, with its little dimpled arms around her neck, while its short flossy curls mingled with hers. The infant seemed to appreciate her almost mute caresses ; for she seldom said anything more than “my darling ! my Louis !” but it was the tone, the passion of the action, that seemed to knit him to her, and to express the fervor of her love. The little one would crow and laugh, and spring into the arms of his father ; but his little head seemed never weary of its resting-place, on the bosom of his sad, fond mother.

As evening approached, Mr. Clarendon stole away with the

child, that he might give vent to the fullness of his love for his darling. He gazed into the face of his beautiful boy, almost fearfully marking the expression of his wife's spirit-like eyes, in her child. Then he would tremble, lest he was too sweet for earth, and that his only joy would be taken from him. He had felt of late that he had wholly lost his Flora, and often, at midnight, had stolen with stealthy steps to her room, that he might look at her asleep, try to recall her, and imagine her all again his own. He often spent hours looking upon her pale features, now colorless as her pillow ; and sometimes, when her sleep was profound, he would press his lips to her brow, and leave her to calm repose. These were now the sweetest moments that he passed away from his boy. But if she stirred—if her eyes opened—he vanished from the presence of one, who seemed no longer to love him.

Thus, cheerlessly, days passed with the husband and wife ; their sorrow all created by the arts of a designing woman, and indiscretion on the part of one who proved not regardless of appearances, though he shunned actual wrong. Mr. Clarendon often found Flora with her Bible ; and in prayer, when he had secretly watched her, a petition for him would gush forth tenderly from the lips that shunned his holiest kiss. Mr. Clarendon returned late one evening from New York, and, as was his custom, went in pursuit of his wife and boy.

The child seemed restless and unwell. He attempted to take it from Flora, but she only hugged it the closer ; and with eyes that seemed starting from their sockets, occasionally gazed in his face with apprehension. Mr. Clarendon was alarmed, and sent for Doctor Vale. The child grew languid, and breathed heavily, and at intervals cried sharply. The face of Flora betrayed her agony. She rushed with him to the corner of the apartment, and seemed to think that if alone with her idol, she could restore him. She poured into her lap all her varieties of jewels ; diamonds, rubies, and sapphires flashed on the eyes of the child. His little hand one moment lay upon the glittering gems, then turned from them ; he hid his face upon his mother's neck, while his tiny fingers wreathed in and out of her hair. Flora became apparently frantic, but allowed no one to touch the child. Mr. Clarendon found the necessity of thwarting her, for the child's welfare ; and, with gentle force, took little Louis from her embrace. For the first time, she looked at her husband ; and such a glance ! Her eyes spoke

volumes ; and in their expression he read the utter wretchedness of her heart. There was no insanity there. "Flora," said he, "you must give up the child, or he will die."

"Then, oh ! my God, take me too !" burst from the lips of the distressed mother, as she released her boy. Benson then took the child, and forced some drops between his teeth. His breathing grew worse. The truth flashed upon those around him. Little Louis was in the agonies of croup. The struggles of the child were fearful. His breath became shorter and more hoarse. Flora seized his little thrown up hands, while she tried to catch the gleam of his rolled up eyes. He did not seem to know her. Medical aid was procured ; powerful remedies were used, but all in vain ; the only joyful thing that the house had contained, was a little beautiful corpse that night !

With agonized gaze, both father and mother looked upon the clay of their darling child. Mr. Clarendon buried his head on its pillow, and wept like one bereft of hope ; but no tears fell from the sad mother's eyes.

The wretchedness of abject despair was written on eye, lip, and brow, while, with clasped hands, she hung over the lifeless form of her child. Doctor Vale endeavored to remove her from the bed, fearing the result of such bitter anguish : her husband also spoke to her tenderly, and said : "Come with me, Flora, and I will try to soothe you." But she stirred not so much as an eye-lash. Benson watched the scene from a corner of the room ; she said not a word, but came forward, and took up Flora as she would a child, and placed her upon her bed ; and after applying water to her temples, darkened her room, and left her alone. But it was not long before hushed footsteps were about her bed, while in the opposite room still sat the bereaved father, by the couch of his dead boy.

Soon, other voices were heard in that afflicted chamber ; and the soft, sad eyes of Cora Livingston rested upon the wretched mother, and then upon the little pale Louis. And as morning dawned, Mr. Dethwaite and his sister sat beside the afflicted parents, and, in their sympathy, attempted consolation. But cold and stony was the gaze of Flora, upon each one that approached her bedside, excepting Cora Livingston. To her she extended her hand, and pointed to the opposite room. She would allow Benson also to arrange her pillow,

and once put both her hands in her rough palm, and with a pleading look, said. "Let me go to my baby—put him on my shoulder, he loves to lie there. Don't leave him alone, he is mine, not his." Flora shuddered as she spoke, and drew the sheet over her face, as if she would shut out the image of her husband. Dr. Vale then came beside her bed, and told her if she would be quiet, that to-morrow she should look again upon her boy. "But he must be dressed," she murmured; "no one must do it but his mother—he won't cry now!"

"Go to sleep if you can," said the Doctor, in a choked voice; "his father will take care of him."

Suddenly Flora rose from her pillow, she resisted all opposition, and came to the side of her dead child. She laid her hand on his now cold forehead, and lifted the curls, one by one from his brow.

"Shall we sever some of them?" whispered Miss Dethwaite to Mr. Clarendon.

"Yes," said the sad father; and approached nearer the couch.

Flora saw the movement. She threw herself beside her baby; and while she covered the little form in her shawl, she cried:

"Leave him. His curls belong to the angels, he is one of them now. Let him go as God took him—he is ready with his white robe. He was all I had, but"——

Flora now sunk with the effort she made on the child's bed, and was carried away senseless. Mr. Clarendon then severed a few of the infant locks from the head of little Louis, and crossed on his breast, the little dimpled hands, that had so often wound about his mother's neck. He then called for a white ribbon. Benson brought one that Flora had worn in her hair at her marriage. With this he tied the little arms together, and after adjusting his head, he could do no more; he buried his face in his hands and tried to give him up.

When Flora came again, the dead baby was laid in its coffin. As yet she had shed no tear. Her hands were full of white rose-buds; and her face pale as the flowers. With wild dishevelled hair, eyes sunken with agony, and pale lips apart, she put down her ear, as if to hear him breathe. Suddenly she saw the ribbon that tied the hands of her little Louis. She knew it, and in a low tone of anguish, said:

"Take it, oh take it away; bind him not with the tie of my bridal wreath! There is no bliss here! Was it woven for death? Yes—death—death was in the garland!"

"To me," whispered the husband, "it told of love and happiness, and so I gave it to our child."

His words were unheeded, while Flora murmured:

"They would not let me dress you, baby!—no, not for the last time."

Flora was now permitted to stay beside the coffin. She was still almost motionless, and uttered scarce a moan. But the Doctor finally grew alarmed with her quiet despair, and called her husband aside.

"She must be made to weep," he said.

"How can it be effected?" questioned the distressed husband.

"Close the lid of the coffin," he whispered.

It was done. A wild shriek burst from the lips of Flora, while from her eyes came a gush of burning tears; sobs, fearful and prolonged, agitated her breast, when she was borne away from her dead idol in convulsive but tearful grief.

To the lookers on, the coldness between Flora and her husband was a dark mystery, for all saw that not a word passed between them; and that separately they spent their hours of grief.

"She is like her mother," murmured Doctor Vale, in the ear of Mr. Dethwaite. "Some anguish greater than the death of her child, is preying upon her mind; we must discover it, or it will produce insanity."

"I will go to her and talk to her of her mother."

Mr. Dethwaite and the Doctor proceeded to the chamber of Flora. She turned aside her head from the former, and placed her hand in that of the Doctor.

"Flora," said the latter, "I was at the death-bed of your mother; and this gentleman with me was present at her marriage."

With streaming eyes Flora cast an eager, searching look upon Mr. Dethwaite.

"Yes, my poor sorrowing one," said Mr. Dethwaite, taking the hand of Flora, "in me you see the brother of your father, and the friend of your respected mother. I saw your parents wedded; and in you, dear Flora, I have found at last, their child. Poor, loved Isora! I would see her grave."

A look of gratitude lighted for a moment the features of Flora, then giving her hand to her uncle, she exclaimed :

"Do I listen to the truth? And wretched as I am, do I indeed see my father's brother, one who can love Isora's child?"

"Be still rich in happiness; be not ungrateful, my dear afflicted one, for the mercies still left you; think of your noble, devoted husband"——

"Devoted! Ah, devoted to another!"

"Believe it not, my poor child; you have an enemy whose arts have nearly wrecked your happiness."

"And does he not love her—visit her—write to her! Oh, if you are my father's brother, take me, oh take me with you, from him."

"Love this woman? He has told me of her worthlessness; of his utter contempt for Madame Delano."

"Why then did he see her? Why—the rest?"

"To annihilate the past, when he was drawn away by her snares; to regain from her the letters once written her, before he was married, Flora."

"Why has he not told me this?"

"To save you pain. He has confessed all to me, for I too was deceived."

"And I have suffered from false appearances!" Flora looked at her child's empty cradle, and lifting up her arms whispered: "Then he is left to me. Oh, tell my husband his poor Flora is alone."

A moment passed, and Flora lay sobbing in the arms of her husband. Again she is his loving, but tearful, sorrowing wife.

Together they now approach the little coffin—but a strong arm supports the bereaved mother; and a faithful, devoted heart is ready, full of sympathy, to soothe her grief. The blow has come alike suddenly to both; but new joy has burst even upon this night of sorrow; and when they laid "their darling down to rest," it was with hopeful resignation that the God who had so afflicted them, had done all things well. For the first time the proud man knelt to his God, in prayer, and rose in submission to the will of Heaven.

Little Louis was laid by the side of Isora Dethwaite, and while around his fresh grave the survivors mourned, not one was there, save the aunt of Flora, who had not looked upon the face of her, who had so early laid down her sorrowing head

—the victim of circumstances, from such as too many in this cold world suffer—leaving in her melancholy death, a warning by which all should profit—to make clear the acts of a virtuous life—that on them no dark mystery should rest, bringing wretchedness, instead of joy, upon the hearts who love and grieve.

Flora soon returned in her sable weeds, to her bridal home. Sadly, and tearfully, she looked around her nursery; but not without consolation. The death of her child brought salutary good to the heart of her husband. It taught him the uncertainty of all earthly joys; and while he appreciated with a grateful heart, the purity and truth of her who was to him “more precious than rubies,” he still looked beyond this world, and all its transitory joys, to the Heaven where his little Louis had early fled—to the bosom of his Saviour.

Madame Delano received the punishment she merited. The birth and rank of Flora Clarendon were soon widely circulated; and though she continued in society the same unassuming woman, she ever passed coldly by the unprincipled and frivolous; and so wide was the influence she exerted, that the seductive but beautiful woman, in whose smiles lurked poison and death, never again held her wonted sway in the circles where she had shone conspicuous.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

I cannot think of sorrow now; and doubt
 If e'er I felt it—'tis so dazled from
 My memory, by this oblivious transport.

BYRON.

AT the time Mrs. Linden visited Flora Clarendon, Rufus Wilton sought the home of Cora. She had expected him; and with all her winning ways, had endeavored to reconcile her father to an event which, while it lay in the perspective alarmed him little.

Surrounded as was his daughter, by luxury and receiving as her daily homage, the adulation of many brilliant suitors,

he little feared that his Cora could choose such an alternative as a life in a log hut in Virginia, with a poor physician.

He believed that the crisis of her girlhood's fever had passed ; and that at the age of nineteen, his daughter would be governed by judgment, as well as passion.

But suddenly—alarmingly, the news of her old lover's arrival was imparted to him, and from Cora's own lips, he heard that he came as her accepted suitor. With consciousness of great wrong inflicted somewhere, and by some one, he retreated haughtily, and left Cora to receive her long absent Wilton.

No change had occurred in Cora, since they parted, save the ripening of her girlhood's charms ; a sweeter dignity had perhaps replaced the childish *naïveté* of her manner ; but not a shadow had passed over her spring-time loveliness. She now sat in his old home, with a rapidly beating heart, awaiting his coming.

How well she remembered their parting !—how plainly painted on her vision, was his haggard, sorrowing face, as they met in the obscure village, where she had sought him in the hour of sickness and gloom ! and as she now laid down the page, which she could not read, to look forth from the old window of her home, she wondered if he had since changed. Her silken ringlets fell, as of old, softly about a cheek of lily purity—leaving the red of her lips the brighter for the contrast.

But suddenly, a flush mantled her face—the blue of her eye deepened, and the fluttering of her bosom's drapery showed the agitation within.

Rufus Wilton had arrived—Cora opened the door to meet him—the wild wood, with its violet perfume, was on her memory ; the lovers knew no change—they remembered no parting—no sorrow—in the present, the joy of years was concentrated !

But in subsequent moments, Cora saw that from the face of her lover richer gleams of intellect flashed ; and that the fire of an eye, ever brilliant and expressive, had softened into a deeper, purer light. She saw now that the youthful color that once mounted to his cheek was gone, but that over his face the illumination of mind, and a noble heart, was more than ever visible. She was deeply impressed with the quiet earnestness of his tones, that betrayed less of the impulse and fervor of youth, and more of the maturity of riper manhood. He

also saw that the childish grace of the girl of seventeen summers had now softened into the maturity of womanhood, bestowing that which gave character to loveliness. The years that had separated them, had but strengthened their attachment. He saw now with the expansion of a form, more than ever bewitching, a mind teeming with richer cultivation—and in the clear softness of an eye that fell beneath his ardent gaze, a soul untainted by the worship of an admiring world.

The now hopeful suitor had brought with him from Virginia, proofs of his high position, and of that independence which he had won by honest toil. These he presented to Colonel Livingston with a bold heart, and unshrinking resolution, and again asked him for his daughter. He saw at a glance that prosperity had inflated the pride of the father's heart, and that more ambition swelled at its core than he could gratify. Still, with manly independence he stood before the father for the last time, to urge his suit.

Together they had resolved to be the arbiters of their own destinies. Arrived at mature years, with the experience and sorrow of twice their life's period, Cora and Wilton had pledged their hearts, and, with the will of God, had determined that no other power should separate them through life.

"What have you to offer my daughter?" said Colonel Livingston, stiffly.

"What I left her, sir, to earn—a reputation and independence, such as will enable me to support her honorably, and without discredit to her friends. I have brought you letters as to a stranger; they are from persons of distinction, who claim me as among the first in their estimation. I have no boast to make myself—come to Virginia, and I will there better prove my position."

"But can you maintain her in style?"

"I will endeavor to make her happy."

"Do you still talk of romance and a cottage! Begone with your nonsense, and not insult my daughter with such offers. No, thank God, she has a home worthy of her birth and name."

The Colonel elevated his gouty foot, and took some dyspeptic pills.

"Good morning, Colonel. I suppose I shall find Cora on the avenue; I will seek her and return to you."

The proposal was effected, and, after an hour's earnest con-

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 versation, Wilton repaired with his companion to the presence of the afflicted Colonel.

"Well, my daughter," said the latter, "you are just in time. I wish you would decline for me this invitation to Woodside. Can't go, possibly. Did you ever have the gout, Wilton? look out for it, as you would for the approach of an enemy, armed at all points. No danger, I suppose, living on corn-dodgers and bacon—eh?"

"I have no time to parry your thrusts, Colonel, being now engaged in an enterprise that I trust will improve my condition, poor as I may be."

A faint smile passed over Cora's face, as she said, "I am sure papa will not stand in the way of his own comfort, which has been always affected by his child's happiness." She laid her hand in her father's as she spoke. Her look was one of inquiring earnestness. Colonel Livingston avoided her eye, while he said :

"The gout is more than a saint can endure, but one cannot live like a gentleman, and avoid it."

"Can you not convince your father, Cora, that our united efforts might effect his cure. I have brought your daughter to you, Colonel, to continue the cause in which I have failed—let her not prove unavailing."

With these words Wilton vanished, when Cora said,

"I need but ask you not to again separate us; papa you cannot refuse longer"—

"Cora, remember that there is not much romance after matrimony."

"But it is not romance that influences either of us; and your child seeks all the happiness she craves on earth, when she follows the fortunes of her chosen husband. When I was younger I listened to your objections, but now my judgment seconds my heart's wishes. You must, dear papa, yield this contested point—or"—

"What, Cora?"

"Cause me enduring sorrow."

"Sorrowful in this long-coveted home, with your proud fortune!"

"Oh, papa, what but pride stands in the way of our happiness?"

"How can you bear the change?"

"I can live as Rufus and his mother have lived."

"His mother! Rosa Neville? is she among the living? call Wilton."

The summons was heard in an adjoining apartment, and obeyed. The Colonel was excited and nervous, while he impetuously asked "If the tale of his mother's existence was true."

The conversation that followed, was full of impatient queries, and exciting replies to the Colonel. The current of his thoughts were suddenly changed; his manner towards Wilton became softened, and acquiescent; and Cora and her lover saw with mutual satisfaction that his manner implied all that his words failed to express. He left the presence of both as evening advanced; and regardless of his indisposition, paced the floor of the outer room, with his head bent and his mind absorbed in deep meditation. But once he looked within. He saw the devotion of the lovers, and met the eye of Wilton, who rose, and said:

"Shall we take your silence for consent?"

"No, you have it in words—Cora, my foolish child, do you hear me?"

Her face was raised to her father's. It was full of serene happiness.

The Colonel was satisfied, and again retired. His thoughts were with Rosa, Wilton as he last saw her, when by the light of evening, he instigated her to leave her home—to abandon her husband. How little he deemed then, that long years of separation would divide them! He glanced at the opposite mirror—he was good-looking still. But would she recognize him young and handsome as he then was! and again and again, arose the query, Would she marry him now? Slowly but surely came the response in the affirmative; for had he not riches and influential position. Sudden youth seemed revived as he pondered and ruminated—and when he laid down to sleep, his brain was as full of hopeful visions as the hearts of those whose prospects he would so recently have blasted.

Colonel Livingston determined to offer his hand to "Rosa Neville," for such she ever lingered in his imagination.

Accordingly the following day he sought the beloved of his youth, having nevertheless misgivings as to his personal appearance. Still vanity and his mirror flattered him with the belief that he yet lived in the affections of one so long remembered.

They finally met. Mrs. Linden approached Edward Living-

ston with her usual dignity and elegance, though bearing little resemblance to her former self. The recognition was slowly made—but soon tones and familiar looks, revived the past—The beautiful eyes of the lady met the searching gaze that a pair of gold spectacles could not hide, and as the same glance fell upon a ring familiar, as was once the hand that wore it, with the impulse of awakened feeling, their hearts were united. Rosa ! Edward ! were the mutual ejaculations.

The pale face of the lady wore a glow of new life. The Colonel forgot his gouty foot, and after an evening of conversation, returned to the Hudson that night, for the first time, in utter forgetfulness of his goldheaded cane.

During Wilton's visit to the Park, he had wandered over all the old familiar places, and made glad the heart of old Goody Burke by his coming, and by the promise of a visit from his mother, which at last overwhelmed her with joy. She laughed, cried, and could scarcely believe the existence of her senses, when with her raised glasses she gazed once more upon the face of her old mistress—and who can say that in the hearts of those who had been separated for long years, emotions of joy had not been kindled of equal fervor and sincerity, as in those that gladdened the breasts of the young and joyous.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

To love, to bless, their blended souls were given,
And each, too happy, asked no brighter heaven.

DR. DWIGHT.

RUFUS WILTON arrived home, with a budget of letters, which proved entertainment for a twilight hour. The son first read one from his uncle Peter, which gave an amusing description of his marriage to Miss Sally Sapp—an event for which he made many apologies at “his time of life.” Another from Cora was seized with avidity, while the eyes of the lady rested upon one, that caused her sudden and deep emotion.

It was from Canton, but not alas ! from her long-absent brother, for whose coming she had so fondly looked. The

letter, which paled her features, announced to her his death—by which event, his nephew came into possession of the sole estate of his wealthy relative, saving a rich legacy which he bequeathed to his sister. Thus the residence, which Wilton had so beautifully adorned, became his own ; and was already fitted for the reception of its owner. Wilton having never known his uncle, was little affected by his death ; but when he observed his mother's grief, he felt, that so much wealth had not befallen them without its alloy. He had no associations, like her, to recall, of a brother's love in childhood—no disappointment of a reunion with the only surviving member of a large family, all of whom, had now, beside herself, descended to the tomb. She, that was once an idolized daughter and sister, felt deeply the bereavement. She was at last alone of all her generation ; and the raven as he fluttered his dark wing over her head, on her visit to her old ancestral home, had seemed to forbode the decease of him she mourned. She had now, no wish to return to it. Death had too often found its victims there. She was happiest in her quiet home, and they who would occupy it, could not feel, like herself, that its charm had flown. Rosa Neville still lived in the sad Mrs. Linden ; and affections once held, were with her, strong as the chords that united her to earth. The ideal, that she carried year after year in her heart, was at last torn from it ; but while she mourned the faults of a character, which so much tarnished the brightness of the original, she still loved Edward Livingston. Yet she declined his proposal of marriage—to become the mistress of the superb home—once to her but a prison of sorrow. With her old lover she recalled the past, and with eloquent feeling told him of all the wrong that had been practised upon them both, which had urged her to marry one, she learned to despise—and while she confessed her sin of concealment, she did not palliate the wrong she had done him through a long life. But Edward Livingston, needed not her tears, or repentance—he coveted the idol of his youth, in his spacious home. Yet Rosa Linden knew that their lives had been different—that circumstances had made diverse their tastes, and she preferred still to cherish the ideal of her imagination, who to her was faultless, than to feel, year after year, the visible change wrought in one, she had deemed so perfect. She felt that while she had lost her worldly pride, Colonel Livingston had fostered the germ, now deeply rooted. Had

he, when in the depths of humility and poverty, been enabled to have offered her his hand, she could not have rejected him—she had become his wife; nor could she see any hope of softening then into humility the arrogance of his nature—but in the hands of God, she could only leave him, trusting that the prayers of those who loved him, would yet be answered—and that he might die, if he had not lived, an humble Christian.

Colonel Livingston felt deeply the refusal of Mrs. Linden, to unite her destiny at last with his—but it was as much a blow to his pride, as to the long cherished affection which he fancied still lived. He deemed her a magnificent representative of his once-loved Rosa—if without the girlish grace of the young wife from whom he had last parted. Why, he asked himself, had she rejected him, with all the proof he had had of her long-abiding love? Had he been poor and humble in station, he might have doubted her constancy—but now, that she preferred obscurity, and a solitary life, to luxuriousness and his society, was to him a humiliating mystery. He received in her refusal, a great and annihilating blow; what, he asked himself, was the value of all his wealth and influence, if neither could buy him one affectionate heart?

He became gradually a changed being. He looked upon himself in his true light, without the false glare of pomp and show; he contrasted the worship of the swarm of heartless flatterers, who feasted on his wealth, with the genuine sincere affection that abides through all ills, and sighed that he so little merited it.

Could his possessions combine to soothe an old age of loneliness?—it was true that his blessed child would cling to him, though far away; yet she preferred an humble home, to his once coveted, and now possessed inheritance. He saw that she had not set her heart on the riches of this world, but that love was the main principle of her life, and God within the temple.

The Rosa, too, of whom he had dreamed, on whose separation from her husband he had gloated, whom he had sought in secret, and vowed some day to possess, she had now rejected him. And why? Because he was a worldly-proud man. For had she not told him, bright, glorious woman that she was, that she was too humble, too lowly for him? The lofty, arrogant Edward Livingston bowed under the affliction, and left the

only woman he had ever worshiped with humiliation and shame. He uttered no word of reproach, for he felt that with all the bitter repentance she suffered in her sense of wrong towards him, she was, in her contrite spirit, far holier than himself.

Neither would Rosa Linden accept a home with her son ; she preferred to die as she had lived, in the exercise of a life of benevolence. The one great sin of her life cost her hours of daily repentance ; and if penitential tears, and heartfelt sorrow for her fault, could atone for the wrong, she might hope for forgiveness. Her wealth enabled her to do good ; and by the exercise of self-denial, she saved liberal sums for the indigent, and for those who had been in better circumstances, whose pride and delicacy prevented an exposure of their poverty. To such she loved most to extend her charity, for she knew that they were the really needy.

The children of Flora Clarendon were ever through life like her own ; and in after years, the little Rosa, who bore her name, and her mother's own radiant eyes and locks, was the blessing of her declining years.

With softened feelings, and regret for the treatment of the noble-hearted Wilton, Colonel Livingston finally reconciled himself fully and cordially to his marriage with Cora, and now looked forward to the period with grateful joy, for he saw that by the union he made happy the only being who had loved him, through good and through evil.

The day had been fixed upon for their nuptials, and the Colonel had set his heart upon honoring Wilton with a wedding of great splendor, and commenced preparations for the event. He was, however, disappointed when Cora informed him she wished to be married in church, on some morning appointed, and to leave quietly without parade or show.

The Colonel was desirous of a magnificent *fête*, but Cora as firmly declined, urging for her argument Wilton's aversion to pomp and display. The Colonel was therefore compelled to yield the point, while he gave orders to have the carriages in readiness on the morning of the appointed day, to convey his family to New York.

Few were apprised of the expected ceremony ; and when the time came, so simply Cora arrayed herself, that even Judy forgot that she was to go forth to her bridal ; and with the bouquet of orange buds and white roses she brought to her, she slipped in her own favorite blossoms of the "golden immor-

tal." But with a smile, Cora told her that she must discard the last, as they were not pretty for a bride.

"Oh!" but said Judy, while her black eyes grew watery, "they are like you, always pretty."

"The blossom was not badly chosen, Judy," said the lover, as he re-arranged the flowers, "for it is a sweet emblem of one fitted for Heaven."

"Oh! hush," whispered Cora. "I never felt so humble as now, so unfit for the blessings of my lot. Where is papa?"

"In the parlor; he is walking the room."

"My dear father! He will be lonely." Cora eyes filled.

"He must come to us. You will not be much separated. Be composed, for my sake, on this occasion."

"I will. The servants are to be present. Go Judy."

Cora returned to her toilet-table, and took from it a ring full of bright stones, which she placed upon Judy's finger. The black eyes now ran over, and the gift was disregarded in the emotion of her honest, loving heart.

"I am afraid that you won't keep your promise," said Wilton, as he drew nearer his intended bride.

"My poor father, I would not grieve him. I will try to be composed."

On the arm of her betrothed, Cora came to meet her father. He met her with outstretched arms, and silently held her to his breast, while he whispered,

"God for ever bless you."

"You will follow us," murmured the daughter, struggling to be calm.

"Yes, yes, darling; take her Wilton, you have earned her nobly; guard her as your life—make her happy, and take, too, my blessing."

"I have left my Bible for you, papa; it will speak to you of me."

"Bless you, bless you, child."

It was a day befitting the occasion, the setting forth of the two happy beings on the journey of life, when Rufus Wilton and Cora Livingston approached the altar to be united. No robe of costly splendor floated around her person, no veil of gossamer lace enveloped her form; but the few who looked upon her, as she went up the sacred aisle on the arm of her noble lover, felt that they witnessed the happiness of two loving, trustful hearts. No marble paleness during the ceremony overspread the delicate features of the bride, or made more

snowy the open brow, where naught lay but the parted waves of her golden hair ; but the pure light that illumined her face, was such as lies on the cheek of infancy ; and when she placed her hand in that of the calm, dignified groom, he looked down upon her as one receiving a holy trust. While at the altar, other responses were heard to mingle with the low tones that uttered the solemn " amen " arising to Heaven on that joyful occasion. Mr. Dethwaite and his sister too, bowed reverentially, and near them the bent form of old Goody Burke knelt in prayer, but nearer still, a graceful being enveloped in rich folds of deepest black, with a long veil of crape thrown aside from her pale features, called down the blessing of Heaven upon the lovely bride and her happy husband, and though sadly her dress contrasted with that of those around her, one who looked upon her, as she met the fond eyes of a husband, who watched her emotion, could not but feel that though sorrowing, she too was blest.

The Colonel had lost his air of pride, his voice grew husky, and his eyes tearful, as he gave his daughter away, and though few could resist a smile, when Judy followed with long strides, preceding Sophy up the aisle, all sympathized with the affectionate child, as a sob burst from her breast, while she received the kind farewell of Cora, as she stepped into her carriage for her wedding journey, with the promise of a future home with her young mistress.

From the church door they drove away, followed by the warm friends that had assembled, none offering Cora and Wilton more sincere congratulations than the old suitor of the bride, Louis Clarendon. Mrs. Linden was not present ; she preferred to welcome her children to the little Virginia cottage.

A fortnight of leisure travelling brought the bride and groom to the hilly region of Virginia, near by their rural home. Cora was enchanted with the picturesque country through which they travelled ; mountain, stream, and valley seemed prolific with beauty ; and the coloring of forest, hill, and sky, worthy of the poet's pen and painter's pencil. In all beautiful spots they had rested, wandered, and idled away hours of uninterrupted happiness, seeing new beauties to delight the eye in all God's glorious things. At times they would look down into the bosom of a secluded valley, where cottages nestled in Arcadian loveliness, begirt with hills, and shaded

with towering trees, whose lofty trunks were garlanded with vines and flowers ; then the eye of Cora would rest delighted upon a silver stream, glancing in the sunshine, then winding onwards to sleep in some grassy vale, in peaceful beauty. But the swelling, bolder features of the landscape Cora most admired. To the sublime and magnificent she was ever most attracted.

The peaks of mountains cradling on their summits clouds of crimson and gold, then melting away into the silver haze that often seems there to for ever rest, were ever scenes to awaken the romance of her nature, and send her spirit soaring beyond hill and cloud. Occasionally she saw a deer bounding from the woods, as they sought wider paths, and sometimes an eagle soaring in the sky. The voice of the waterfall, mingled with the murmuring of forest leaves, seemed music in rich unison with the harmony of their hearts. Together they had

" Climbed the mountain's everlasting wall,
Lingered where the thunder waters fall,
Wandered by old ocean's side,
And held communion with its silver tide."

But at last they approached the little cottage-home of their sweet, but ever sad mother. Her welcome was affectionate, and so neat, tasteful, and flowery seemed the sequestered little cot, that Cora felt no craving for greater splendor. The sweetest breath of summer came through her neatly matted apartment, while around her was arranged all that one could ask for comfort. In the gaiety of her heart Cora sought the wildest spots, and shadiest nooks—rambles never happier on the shores of the Hudson ; but the following day, her husband proposed to seek their own home, to which Cora roved in imagination, with curiosity and interest. Wilton had reserved the news of his recent inheritance, and with his fervent desire to leave her own property untouched, had determined to content herself with the home he provided for her, however humble it might be.

The drive was not long, before they reached the region in which Neville Hall was situated ; and soon travelled by miles of partly cultivated grounds, hedged by hawthorn with which was mingled running roses.

It was approaching evening. The smell of evergreens, and shrubbery unfamiliar to her eye, together with the soft breath of a summer afternoon, subdued her senses into dreamy silence.

Wilton pleausurably watched the expression of her face, as the gleams of summer light fell across it, through the quivering forest leaves, boughs of which, sometimes, brushed them familiarly as they passed.

He saw her gaze extending far into the extensive parks of untrained verdure, save such undue clearing as admitted of smooth slopes of vivid green. Again her eye resting upon the patches of flowering laurel and rhododendron, and the next moment roving above the proud leafy sons of the soil, to the sublime hemlock, which above them all stood, like an "ivy-mantled tower."

A thunder-shower had, during the afternoon, cleared the air, and left its crystal drops still sparkling. Clouds of purple, edged with gold and violet hues, lay about the horizon, on which were heaped piles of silver-tinted wreathing mists, and above breaking from a dark rolling cloud became visible, as Cora looked, a patch of heaven's blue.

"It is clearing away—look, Rufus, see the sky! how beautiful!" exclaimed the young bride. But ere his attention was attracted, her eyes had sought another scene. She was now looking from the open window of the carriage over an extended woodland, full of dingles, bright cascades, and shining rivelets, all embowered by overhanging trees of stately growth. Here Cora clasped the arm of her husband, while, with hushed breath she murmured: "This is Elysium!"

A smile passed over the face upon which she looked, and they drove slowly onward through the green archway, her eye bewildered, and her senses charmed. Soon they came upon what seemed a carriage pathway, which brought them nearer the grounds of the Hall. Here was more cultivation—lawns of richest velvet lay visible, in smooth, well-trimmed beauty, broken only by flowering trees and shrubs, among which mingled roses of every variety which the soil could yield. Trees of beech, live oak and ash, together with clumps of towering elms, stood in grand array, at intervals on the grassy lawn, their long shadows lying against the fading sunlight, while scattered around, on slope and terrace, was a species of the magnolia, that prince of the flowery kingdom, rearing to heaven its crystal cups and blossoms.

They had now nearly reached the gates of the "Hall." They were soon opened by a colored servant, who bowed low to greet his young master, when his eager rolling eyes peered

into the carriage for a sight of his young mistress. The coachman drove slowly through. Cora's heart beat fast. "Why was she brought here," she asked in her inquiring gaze.

"We will go on leisurely," said Wilton, enjoying the bewilderment of his wife. They alighted on the wide gravelled path, which was bordered with rich green turf, here and there studded with superb flowers. The sweet blossoms of the cape jessamine nestled among leaves of glossiest green, mingled with those of the oleander and wax-plant, while here and there a beautiful japonica showed its thick white petals. The fresh rain-drops were now glittering on the flowers.

After stopping to admire each lovely plant, Cora was attracted to the scarlet pomegranate blossoms, near which, a climbing rose extended its tendrils to a tall tree, while around it already wreathed the beautiful *Le Marque*, with its myriads of blossoms. The path was circuitous, and they were long reaching the house, so reluctant and slow was their progress through the enchanting lawn. Exceeding sweet was the perfume that went up from the flowers, together with that of the fragrant balsam and fir, that hedged them in.

Sometimes they were separated, while Cora, in her enthusiasm lingered, her husband meanwhile training a fallen vine or drooping rose-bush that the shower had broken down. He was not long absent, but soon at her side, with perhaps an exquisite bud or leaf for her.

So gracefully and harmoniously shrubs and climbing vines mingled with the native tenants of the soil, who seemed proudly to defy foreign invasion, that nature seemed the sole and graceful cultivator.

The sun's last beams were now coming aslant over the lawn, gilding with sunlight each lovely object.

The birds had commenced their evening carol—some were twittering in the lower branches of the trees, others high on the boughs in their old homes, their throats swelling with wild melody.

Cora stopped to listen, then looking into her husband's face, said,

"Why have you brought me here?"

"To share my home, Cora."

"Oh, this is too beautiful—too grand!"

"But not if it came as a gift—an inheritance. Yes, Cora, by my uncle's death, Neville Hall is mine—and yours."

"I wish dear papa could see it. I could have been happy in a cottage."

"We will make him happy here, some day. Perhaps he will pass next winter with us; but we will not stop, for we are near the house."

Preparations had been made for their reception. To many airy, grand apartments, the husband led his bride—through many old-fashioned rooms, where hung the portraits of his ancestors where comfort, ease, and luxury was combined in their simple arrangements; but none to Cora was so enchanting, as a little bower of a place where roses climbed over the diamond windows, where she found the choicest books, a piano, and favorite harp.

This was the birth-place of her husband's mother, and with pleasure she looked out upon the old tree, under which she had played in her childhood.

Wilton opened a door leading through an arbor of grape-vines which being passed, carried them from terrace to terrace, and at last to a dell in the woods, where a natural cascade fell over rocks and hillock, into a trout stream below.

Here they were belted in by firs and evergreens, in a basin surrounded by hills, brilliant with laurel and verdure, where a rose arbor had been recently erected. It was a pleasant place to rest, and an hour passed before they returned to the sweet home, now her own, where with subdued, contented joy, she breathed a silent prayer that she might retain it as but lent her for a season, for which and all other blessings, she should lift her heart in thanksgiving to God.

THE END.



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